

# THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

CYRIL MAUDE



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THE HAYMARKET THEATRE









THE HAYMARKET THEATRE IN 1822.

*From the original drawing by George Shepherd.*

# THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

SOME RECORDS & REMINISCENCES

BY

CYRIL MAUDE

EDITED BY

RALPH MAUDE

ILLUSTRATED

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THE HAYMARKET

THEATRE

SOME REMINISCENCES

THE HAYMARKET

THE HAYMARKET

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## PREFACE

WE have given this book the sub-title of "Some Records and Reminiscences" for the very excellent reason that it exactly describes it. No attempt has been made to write a serious history, and we have only tried to deal with those periods of the theatre's life that are, in our opinion, interesting or entertaining. If our sins of commission are many, our sins of omission are of far greater number, but in the latter case we have sinned with intention.

Our debts to authors past and present, and to almost numberless friends, are far too heavy to be repaid by a mere prefatory recital of their names. We would simply beg the reader believe that without them we could never have put pen to paper, an undoubted fact which will go far to prove the gratitude we feel so strongly.

CYRIL MAUDE.  
RALPH MAUDE.

HAYMARKET THEATRE,  
*June 1903.*



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## CHAPTER I

“At the new Theatre in the Haymarket, between Little Suffolk Street and James Street, which is now completely finished, will be performed a French Comedy as soon as the rest of the actors arrive from Paris, who are duly expected.”—*Extract from Daily Paper, December 15, 1720.*

SUCH was the advertisement, if bald and not far-reaching, that heralded the opening of the theatre whose name is only third in interest in the annals of the stage, and is now borne by a playhouse to whose popularity London, fortune be praised, testifies nightly with all its might. The Little Theatre in the Haymarket was built by a carpenter named Potter mainly as a speculation, and as the total amount expended by that gentleman on its construction was but £1500, it is not difficult to realise that it was scarcely pretentious. Nor were its charges excessive: for 5s. you had the choice of pit or box, for 2s. 6d. the gallery was at your service. Were you a buck, an extra fee would let you loll upon the stage, hand upon sword—hilt prepared for provocation. For those were stirring times even for pleasure seekers. You did not take your tickets at a library, nor were you electrically conducted to the door, only to be beckoned by a soft-footed servant to a softer stall, to show your taste by glove-muffled

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handclaps, or the chilly silence that can indeed be felt. Your playgoers of 1720, and many years that followed it, took their pleasure with greater difficulty, and if with considerably less physical comfort, with infinitely greater possibilities of excitement. To-day the majority of us scarcely spend our half guineas at Drury Lane box office in the hope of taking part in a riot, or for the purpose of levelling insult at the head of some disliked performer. Nor am I to believe that Mr. George Alexander takes the Royal Box at His Majesty's Theatre to yell derision at Mr. Tree's clever but inoffensive head. Yet they did all these things in the good old days of the Little Theatre—good old days for the public mayhap, but times that no manager would envy now.

Let me attempt a picture as I have seen it through the spectacles of the records that still remain to us. Suppose it a first night in those dear old days—and happily first nights were more frequent then than now, so frequent indeed that there seemed to be little else! The time is half-an-hour before the rising of the curtain. The better part of the theatre is full of footmen, sent thither to keep their masters' places—not the solemn, arms-folded, impeccable, perfect creatures who have their home in Mayfair to-day, but gruff-voiced, obtrusive braggarts, coarse and loud of mouth, dressed in velvet and silken hose, and “lolling over the boxes with their hats on, playing over their airs, taking snuff and laughing aloud, or holding dialogues with their brethren from one side of the house to the other : the most useless, insolent, corrupted set of people in Great Britain.”

The ancient chronicler was no gentle critic.

Then as the master strolls in, all velvet and silk and lace and scent, bejewelled and bepowdered, well



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armed and ready for a quarrel, Jeames gives place to him. But Jeames does not leave the theatre. He lays claim to a right to a seat in the upper gallery free of all charge. The manager protests. Heaven help the manager! Uproar is scarcely the word for Jeames's reply as he literally hacks his way to the seat to which he lays claim. He seated and moderately quiet, "ringing up" becomes a possibility, and the play begins, the stage half crowded with bucks in their bravest—as gorgeous in their appearance as they are unmannerly in their behaviour, and not only to themselves. They guffaw at a player's slip, and threaten to bring down the house in more senses than one if the piece be not to their liking. And it is scarcely for the unhappy management to interfere. Their swords are as sharp as their wit is brutal, and they are not loth to unsheath.

So the players, tremulous for more reasons than one, play their parts. But even if the bucks be quiet, and the footmen cease to roar, and the piece jogs peacefully on, they are not yet at the end of their tremors. For there was nothing of the Walkley or the Archer or the Joseph Knight about the critics of the dear old days. They were not content to wait till the engines were getting ready for the Press to express their opinions. Nor, if the piece threatened success, were rival manager or rival player content to bite a silent, jealous lip. If their wit were keen, they would express it to the delight of the people who sat around them; and if Nature had denied them humour, she seldom forbad them a coarse tongue in those dear old days. Need I add that the player's lot could scarcely have been a happy one? His faltering speech, his trembling gait, his possible lapse of memory were not excused on the plea of nervousness as to-day,

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but became the excuse for a gibe that would surely "dry up" our oldest actor in this year of grace.

If truth must be told, when the Little Theatre saw its first years of life the actor was scarce a *persona grata*. He neither opened bazaars nor knelt at the touch of his sovereign's sword. "Threshing," sighed a sympathetic critic of the time, "were not more laborious than acting," and acting had few of the sweet compensations we poor players enjoy to-day. £12 a week was no mean salary in those times, and a long run was a thing unknown until Fielding produced his celebrated "Pasquin," which ran for fifty nights, and caused far more sensation than Mr. Penley's record with "Charley's Aunt." The amount of study which my poor predecessors must have had to undergo in those dear old days, it makes my blood run cold to contemplate. And the manager's lot was little happier. Though he is still the sport of the public, he was much more so in 1720 and for many years that succeeded it. Not only had he a public of terrible difficulty to please, but he could never open his theatre without fear of a riot, or close it without a shudder as to the possibility of never being able to open it again. He was tied down by this restriction or that, and even when the bucks chose to slash his very hangings to bits, he had little or no redress. He was in constant terror of nearly every patron of his house, yet in everlasting fear of losing them all. Indeed he must sometimes have wondered when making some fresh and daring experiment whether he would ever have a theatre at all at the close of the evening's entertainment!

Even from Royalty he could seldom expect much, for the King did not hesitate to comment in well-bred tones upon the merits of the play of which he was a witness, and if it bore, what he thought to be, allusions

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to himself, his condemnation was often forcible. George III., they say, upon a chambermaid in a farce remarking to an old gentleman, "You are villainously old, you are sixty-six, you cannot have the impertinence to think of living above two years," energetically remarked in a loud-pitched voice, "What d——d stuff!" Possibly it was sound criticism, but it was distinctly disconcerting to players and manager alike.

Nor did the presence of Royalty necessarily quell the uproars that were so frequent in those times. Once on the occasion of a Royal visit the objectionable footmen took occasion to make themselves specially obnoxious, and to such an extent that the Riot Act had to be read, which proving insufficient, no less than eighteen Jeames's had to be conveyed very much the worse for wear to Newgate Gaol. In those days the manager would advertise the coming of Royalty, and if kings or princes were not available, would announce the advent of some other celebrity of the day, reputable or very much otherwise. For the fact of the matter was that the manager, even more an object of pity then than now, was often put to sore straits to keep his house open, though his expenses' sheet must have shown a queer total as compared with those of 1903.

As for the dramatic author, he of the first half of the eighteenth century, at any rate, was a far less modest person than our Pineros, our Barries, and our Marshalls of to-day. Imagine, I beg you, Mr. J. M. Barrie "seated in lofty elevation" on the first night of "The Admirable Crichton," and following with laughter and tears the fortunes of his delightful hero and heroine, pausing only to reprove audibly some player who did not please his creative fancy. That was what Steele did in 1722, and Johnson, if less emotional, loved to

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make himself no less conspicuous. Nor did the dramatist of those days take his failures with quite the same dignity and complacency that characterise our stage authors of to-day, though more than one of them was often frank enough to admit the justice of the condemnation meted out to him. Fielding on one occasion revived a play of his with a superscription "as it was damned at the Theatre Royal," which would strike one as an original line for an author to take to-day; but then we have so few author-managers! The author had a deal to contend against in the old days of the theatre. Criticism took such curious turns in those times. "The critics," said Colley Cibber, "come like hounds to a carcass and are all in full cry, sometimes for an hour together, before the curtain rises to throw it amongst them. They seem to me like the lionwhelps in the Tower, who are so boisterously gamesome at their meals that they dash down the bowls of milk brought for their breakfast." The pit was of course the part of the house from which the manager had most to fear, and it was more than once found necessary to conciliate the pittites by a speech from the stage before those worthies would allow the piece to proceed! In the pit, too, the playgoers with a grievance were wont to station themselves, often armed with missiles of a peculiarly objectionable nature. One night, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, a young gentleman who was madly in love with an actress who would have nothing to do with him, got a prominent place in the pit, and proceeded to give vent to his sorrow and spleen by cat-calls and yells of derision, following up these harmonious sounds with a fire of rotten eggs. It is not surprising to hear that some one sitting by the lovesick swain promptly called him a fool and a bully. A duel was the result.



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But the rejected lover had even less pluck than manners, for he begged for his life, which was left to him.

A good story is told of a Parisian critic, who upon the introduction of an asp in "Anthony and Cleopatra" that hissed by some mechanical contrivance, turned to the pit and said, "Gentlemen, I fully share the asp's opinion." How could any piece "go" in the face of such a circumstance as that? And that, if the records are to be believed, is typical of but quite a mild occurrence!

As for the criticisms of the Press of the day, they were indeed as vinegar compared to the sweet water which the player drinks of a morning with his bacon and eggs. To dip into the ancient criticisms is indeed to learn a lesson in the art of writing with a sharp pen. I take one at random from a large collection; it is collective, so will do duty for many more: "Every charity school would supply a dozen wenches of more decent education, character, more health, youth, beauty and genius than the common run of actresses." That was written in 1733, and was by no means a specially terrible specimen. Another writer of the same period found occasion to say that playhouses were "sad instances of the luxury of the present age." Luxury to whom, forsooth? Not to the poor manager and players, I dare swear.

In fact, the more the manager of 1903 dips into the records of those early eighteenth-century years, the more reason must he have to be grateful for the King, the Parliament, the Press, and even the County Council of his present possession.

## CHAPTER II

THIS, I have already said prefatorily, is not to be regarded as a serious history. I leave to some other pen the duty of faithful record, the classification, and all the other things that go to make up what was once my schoolboy bugbear. But I am reluctant to leave the babyhood of the Little Theatre—surely a more chequered weaning were never known!—without a word, the more so in that one or two persons connected with that important period were by no means of little interest.

So I must perforce hark back to 1720, when on December 29 (some have it September 1723, but I cling to my date) the advertised French actors had made the difficult journey from Paris to London in sufficient numbers to enable them to open with "*La Fille à la Morte, or le Badeaut de Paris.*" These actors described themselves as the "*Duke of Montagu's French comedians,*" but even this high-sounding title does not appear to have given them a long term at the Little Theatre, for the following year found Aaron Hill its manager, who produced "*Henry V.*" with a company of amateurs. From that performance I can find little or nothing of interest in connection with the theatre until 1723, when some amateurs occupied it and played "*The Female Fop,*" whose author claimed that he wrote it at the somewhat immature age of fifteen,

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and in a few weeks into the bargain. The fact would have been more remarkable had it succeeded, but it fell an early victim to "frost," and the Little Theatre was given over to concerts and other entertainments till 1726, when Italian Opera, to which the somewhat incongruous feats of rope-dancing and tumbling were added, reigned in their stead. Indeed it was not till 1733, when Theophilus Cibber and his brother seceders revolted from Drury Lane and appeared on the boards of the Haymarket, that the history of the theatre may be said to have really begun, though I would not forbear to mention that between 1723 and 1733 gladiators and backswordsmen shared the honours of the boards with English Operas on the Italian model.

Theophilus Cibber's era of management, brief though it was, sufficed to bring the Little Theatre into some prominence, a prominence which it never afterwards lost save for very brief periods. Styling his company "The Comedians of His Majesty's Revels," he opened on the 23rd of September with "Love for Love," in which he not only figured himself, but also presented his extraordinary sister, Charlotte Charke, whose history will well bear repetition, so remarkable was it.

From the time that Charlotte Charke first trod the boards—if not the earth—she was possessed of an insensate longing to appear in nothing but male characters, in which it appeared she did indeed excel. But her love of male impersonation would not bear confinement to the boards, for after quarrelling with her good father, Colley Cibber, she, after a series of endeavours to earn a livelihood as a strolling player, a grocer, and a proprietor of a puppet-show, assumed the habit of a man as her ordinary attire, and although in turn "super" and ordinary tramp, was so good-looking that an heiress fell in love with her, and nearly

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died of a broken heart on discovering the true sex of her swain. "Tramping" proved an even harder life than poor Charlotte could stand, so she obtained a situation as a valet, then became a sausage maker, and next a waiter at an inn in Marylebone. Her next venture was a tavern in the Lane, for which her uncle gave her money; but this was a failure, and her brother Theophilus making her an offer, she went back to the Haymarket for a brief spell. From the Little Theatre she went to Russell's puppet-show, where she worked the wires, but here again she made no long stay, and was next to be found in a miserable strolling company making frantic struggles for a bare existence. From strolling player she became author of her own autobiography, which brought her in enough to open another tavern. But this, too, came to grief, and she was forced to take refuge in a miserable hut, in which she wrote a novel, with a pair of bellows for a desk. £10 was all she got for the book, but she was very near her end, and a benefit at the Haymarket, at which she played Marplot in "The Busybody," brought her in enough to live in some sort of comfort until her death the following year (1760).

Surely no actor or actress of whom we have any record had more extraordinary experiences than this remarkable creature, whose temper was probably her worst enemy. Her early bringing up, more a boy's than a girl's, undoubtedly had something to do with her love of impersonating the male. Among the phases of her career was some time spent in prison for debt, her release being procured by a subscription raised among the lowest prostitutes of Drury Lane!

Even worse than the character of the extraordinary Charlotte Charke was that of her brother Theophilus Cibber, whose career ended by his being drowned in

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a journey from Dover to Calais. As the husband of the famous Mrs. Cibber, she brought upon him the contempt of all decent people, for, not content with selling her to a seducer, he brought an action against that person for £5000. The judge awarded him a ten pound note. "That unhangd villain," Dr. Doran has called him, and he was not far wrong. Luckily for the wife, the temptation to which he deliberately exposed her resulted in her obtaining a "protector," which ensured her some happiness during the years that remained to her. Mrs. Cibber, by the way, appears to have found the secret of perpetual youth; for she played the part of a girl of sixteen when she was over fifty, and looked it into the bargain. Indeed it is said that she was quite indignant when it was suggested that sixteen should be changed to twenty-three. She was remarkably like Garrick in face, and was about the only lady of his company who could ever manage him.

In this production of Theophilus Cibber's at the Little Theatre, the famous Mrs. Pritchard also made her appearance. Much might be written of her; but as this book is strictly confined to the Haymarket Theatre, she deserves no more than a passing mention in this connection. One of the most remarkable features of Mrs. Pritchard's success was the fact that she entirely lacked education. They say that of "Macbeth" she had never read more than her own part, in which she made an enormous success! But knowledge did not seem to be a *sine quâ non* of the period, for the famous Quin was quite surprised when, after having played in Davenant's "Macbeth" for several nights, Garrick informed him that he was going to produce Shakespeare's tragedy. "You don't mean to say we've not been playing Shakespeare all the time?"



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was Quin's astonished remark. Dr. Johnson, with his usual courtesy, called Mrs. Pritchard "the inspired idiot." Perhaps it was almost perfect criticism.

"The Comedians of His Majesty's Revels" had but a brief time at the Haymarket, for the year after their appearance we find Fielding its manager with a company which he chose to call "The Great Mogul's Company of Comedians." Of this there is nothing to record, nor indeed of the French comedians who followed.

But 1736 was a year big with fate both for the Haymarket and the English stage in general. Fielding again took the Little Theatre, and this time produced his celebrated satirical comedy "Pasquin," aimed directly at the Government, and to whose record run of fifty nights I have already alluded. "Religion, Law, Government, Priests, Judges, and Ministers," says Cibber, "were all laid down by this herculean satirist." London yelled itself hoarse, but the Government, and Walpole in particular, who had been mercilessly caricatured, did not join in the laugh. Instead they passed the Licensing Act which is still law, so that indirectly to the Little Theatre in the Haymarket does Mr. George Redford enjoy his enviable position of Examiner of Plays. In vain did the then Lord Chesterfield in a powerful speech defend the liberty of managers, authors, and players alike; in vain did he dub the Lord Chamberlain's Office the "new Excise Office"—the Bill was passed by a large majority, and the Lord Chamberlain became, as Lord Chesterfield had it, "Chief Gauger, Supervisor, Commissioner, Judge and Jury," characters which he still plays to-day. Indeed, the only difference, so far as the law was concerned, between the manager of the Haymarket in 1737 and Harrison and myself to-day, is the fact that they had no London County Council—and we have. But—

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fortune be praised !—we possess no such irate ministers as Robert Walpole, who thrashed an actor for sneering at his Excise Bill. Luckily there exists no such parallel as Mr. Brodrick threatening Robert Marshall with a horsewhip for taunting the War Office with dilatoriness !

The public took no particular interest in the passing of the Licensing Act, though they insisted on justice being done to the poor English players. The year after the Bill became law some French actors were given authority to open the Little Theatre, power having been denied to an English company. But authority or no authority, the crowd had it their own way, and the play, “*L’Embaras de Richesses*,” never saw Haymarket light.

The next feature of importance in the childhood of the Little Theatre, which went through a period of “House Closed” (with very infrequent openings) until 1744, was the appearance in that year of Macklin, who produced “*Othello*” with a company of amateurs, Foote playing *Othello* and himself *Iago*. Foote, who has the next chapter of this book to himself, was by all accounts a “frost,” as well he might have been ; but Macklin made a success which he repeated afterwards at Drury Lane, whither he went the same year, leaving the Little Theatre to that disreputable gentleman, Mr. Theophilus Cibber. Cibber had no licence, but he escaped penalty by a clever dodge. He advertised his performance thus :

“At Cibber’s Academy in the Haymarket will be a concert ; afterwards will be an exhibition (*gratis*) of a rehearsal, in the form of a play, called ‘*Romeo and Juliet*.’”

This venture, however, was no great success.

Foote was Theophilus Cibber’s successor, and his

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"Diversions of the Morning" became the rage of the town. He, too, had no licence, and invited the public "to drink a dish of chocolate with him."

Foote kept the theatre till 1749, when it was very nearly destroyed by a riot. The riot was brought about in this way. An advertisement appeared in the papers as follows :—

"At the new theatre in the Haymarket, to be seen a person who performs the several most surprising things following, viz. ; First, he takes a common walking cane from any of the spectators, and thereon he plays the music of every instrument now in use, and likewise sings to surprising perfection. Secondly, he presents you with a common wine bottle, which any of the spectators may first examine : this bottle is placed on the table in the middle of the stage, and he without any equivocation goes into it in the sight of all the spectators, and sings in it ; during his stay in the bottle any person may handle it, and see plainly that it does not exceed a common tavern bottle. Those on the stage or in the boxes may come in masked habits (if agreeable to them), and the performer (if desired) will inform them who they are.

Stage, 7/6 ; Boxes, 5/ ; Pit, 3/ ; Gallery, 2/.

To begin half-an-hour after six o'clock."

Needless to say, in face of this entertaining programme an enormous crowd came to the theatre and waited patiently till seven, when, no performer appearing, they proceeded to signify their annoyance in the usual manner of the time. The hubbub produced a person, who promised to return their money if the performer failed to appear, but the audience had evidently lost faith in the management, for upon some one throwing a candle upon the stage a general riot ensued. It was a case of "wigs on the green" with a vengeance. Slash

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went the curtains, crash went the benches, and bang went the boxes. The curtain was torn to ribbons, the scenery shared a similar fate, and the rioters, not content with their night's work, carried the débris outside with them and made a huge bonfire of it in front of the theatre. The Duke of Cumberland in his effort to escape from the crush lost his diamond-hilted sword, upon which a wag bawled out that "Billy the butcher had lost his knife." The unfortunate manager, who declared in the papers that he had been victimised by an unscrupulous scoundrel, got no redress. Some put the hoax down to the authorship of His Grace of Montagu, others to that of Samuel Foote; but the real originator was never discovered.

Needless to say, after that night the bottle trick went out of fashion.

The riot was soon followed by another, at which a considerable amount of blood was shed. The cause was attributable to a French company, of which the British Public would have none, attempting to play at the Little Theatre. Luckily the theatre never suffered by fire, for "fire the house" was a favourite cry of the bullies of the day during a riot, and more than once the attempt was made in other theatres to put the suggestion in force.

After these riots young Cibber again took the theatre, and made his management notable by the introduction of Mrs. Abington to the stage. So short was this famous lady's connection with the Little Theatre that I can find no excuse for an account of her career. She is more noteworthy as the original Lady Teazle, and as Garrick's pet aversion. "She is below the thought of any honest man or woman," said the mighty Roscius; "she is as silly as she is false and treacherous." But whether Garrick were right or no,

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her powers as an actress have never been called in question, and her success as the heroine of "The School for Scandal," is the more remarkable in that she was born of the gutter and raised herself to her high position by sheer talent and energy.

Cibber was once more succeeded in 1760 by Foote, who was prevented from establishing the house as a regular summer theatre until 1762, the theatre having been previously let till then to a teacher of dancing dogs!

But Foote, as I said, has a chapter to himself.



### CHAPTER III

SAMUEL FOOTE was born in the same year that the Little Theatre first opened its doors. There was nothing hereditary about his theatrical talent, for his father was a member of Parliament, and his mother was a daughter of Sir Edmund Goodere, Bart., and a cousin of the Duke of Rutland. Even in his school-days Foote began to show signs of the genius that was in him, and his imitations of every one with whom he came in contact made him immensely popular with his schoolfellows, who never tired of hearing him "take off" his various relations and friends, to say nothing of the masters. His schooltime over, his father sent him to Oxford, where he made more sensation by his extravagance in dress and his caricatures of the venerable authorities, than by brilliance of intellect or studious application. Foote *père* was determined to send his son to the Bar; so from Oxford to the Temple young Samuel went, but he was no greater success at the Law than at the 'Varsity, though the briefless barristers of the time shouted themselves hoarse over his imitations of the legal luminaries of the day. Nor did Samuel Foote show the slightest love for the calling which his good father had chosen for him, and, an opportunity presenting itself, he joined Macklin's company at the Haymarket, and appeared as Othello, a rôle to which he was as much suited as would be Mr. Herbert Campbell to the part of Hamlet.

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In plain words, he was a "frost," which was scarcely surprising. At the same time, the old critics found it hard to say what young Foote's particular line was. Upon Boswell remarking to Dr. Johnson, "He has a singular talent for exhibiting character," Dr. Johnson replied, "Sir, it is not a talent, it is a vice; it is what others abstain from. It is not comedy which exhibits the character of a species, as that of a miser gathered from many misers; it is a farce which exhibits individuals."

"Did he think of exhibiting you, sir?" went on Boswell.

"Sir," replied Dr. Johnson, "fear restrained him; he knew I would have broken his bones. I would have saved him the trouble of cutting off a leg. I would not have left him a leg to cut off."

"One Foote a player," was Walpole's contemptuous dismissal of the actor, but he was generally known as "The British Aristophanes," a title which, despite the undoubted wit of his satires, he scarcely deserved.

"What the deuce then am I fit for?" exclaimed Foote himself, having failed both in comedy and tragedy. He soon discovered that his rôle was that of a caricaturist, and he was probably the greatest mimic that has ever lived. Whom he caricatured, or how gross was the caricature, he cared not at all, though he had a wholesome respect for physical force, and Dr. Johnson's threat to break every bone in his body prevented him taking off that eminent, if irascible, personage, who could not help admiring Foote's genius despite his dislike of the man himself. Foote would caricature anything that would make the public laugh and draw them to the Little Theatre. Physical defects, legal or ministerial blunders, re-

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ligious subjects—none came amiss to him, and his lash was never light. But he did not like being hit back, and when Woodward reproduced him on the stage he was very sore about it. He thought nothing, however, of introducing a puppet-show, whose puppets, he declared, would not be “as large as life, not larger, indeed, than Mr. Garrick.” But he never had a hit at Barry, out of respect for that gentleman’s six-foot of powerful manhood. He was a vain, conceited, extravagant fellow, and managed to run through three fortunes, a fact which he published on the panels of his carriage by the motto “*iterum, iterum, iterumque.*” A good story is told of how when in Scotland he would curl his hair with one-pound notes to show his contempt of paper money, which was not in circulation over the border. But when his cook came for orders of a morning Foote would uncurl lock after lock until the good woman had enough money for her day’s marketing, a duty which she fulfilled in a sedan-chair! At his own table in London, when the cloth had been removed, Foote would invariably ask, “Does any one drink port?” If the answer happened to be “no,” he would turn to the servants and bid them “take away the ink.”

Extravagance in dress was one of his chief foibles, and he was very proud of his descent, of which indeed he had little reason to be ashamed, though his mother’s youngest brother, Captain Goodere, strangled his eldest brother on board his own ship in his desire to get hold of the estates. Cooke took Foote one night to a club and introduced him as “Mr. Foote, the nephew of the gentleman who was lately hung in chains for the murder of his brother.”

Foote was seldom “scored off,” but on one occasion a Scottish lawyer had decidedly the best of him. Foote

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having lost a case in Edinburgh, the man of law called on him in London with his bill of costs. On paying it Foote said with a sneer, "I suppose like the rest of you Scotchmen you're going back to Edinburgh the cheapest way possible."

"Ay, ay, you're right," said the canny lawyer tapping his pocket full of guineas, "I'm going back on foot." The actor didn't like the joke at all.

But if Foote was scored off more than once, the amount of times in which the actor had the best of the joke was almost without number. He was never ill at ease in whatever company he found himself. One night some one took him into White's and asked him to wait a moment while he wrote a note. Foote stood there looking, so Lord Carmarthen who was present thought, rather embarrassed. His lordship wishing to be civil, but being at the same time extremely shy himself, went up to him, and for want of something better to say, remarked, "Mr. Foote, I think your handkerchief is falling out of your pocket." Foote hurriedly pushed the article back and bowed his thanks. "It is most kind of you, my lord," he said; "you know the company better than I do."

But Foote, despite his caustic tongue, was in great request at smart young men's dinner-parties, and took the lead in the conversation, whatever the subject might happen to be. His popularity in this respect is rather surprising, seeing that it is to be believed that he was "very disgusting in his manner of eating, and not cleanly in his person." George Colman the younger says that the end of his nose was always plentifully bestrewed with snuff, but he boasted of being a great judge of wine and cooking, and professed a perfect horror of plain dishes.

Though he was often threatened with personal

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violence on account of his bitter wit, he was nearly always ready with the "soft answer." One night at a party some one wanted to get up a quarrel with him on account of his personal satire. "Of course I take all my friends off," said Foote, "but I use them no worse than myself. I take myself off." "Gad so," said one of the company, "that's a thing I should mightily like to see." Whereupon Foote promptly took up his hat and left the room. On another occasion, after his production of "The Nabobs," aimed at Anglo-Indians in particular, a party of irascible gentlemen called at his house with the intention of giving him a good hiding; but so charmingly did Foote receive them, and so clear was his explanation that the satire was not intended to refer to them, but only to *naughty* old Anglo-Indians, that instead of thrashing him they stayed to dinner and made a big night of it!

Solemn occasions, old friendships, high rank—nothing was sacred enough to prevent Foote exercising his wit when so minded. On one occasion, upon a man meeting him after the funeral of his old friend Charles Holland, whose father was a baker, he said, "Yes, I've just seen poor Holland shoved into the family oven." On another he invited Sheridan to his theatre, put him in the most prominent place possible, and then, to the great dramatist's intense annoyance, proceeded to caricature him broadly upon the stage to the delight of the audience, who, of course, recognised both the original and the caricature.

Foote's disposition was intensely jealous, and he never forgave Garrick his great success. Garrick's triumph at Stratford on the occasion of the Shakespeare jubilee brought a sharp retort from Foote upon the inoffensive head of a gentleman who tried to make himself agree-



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able to the actor by talking to him of the excellence of the performance they had just seen. Foote at first listened in silence, then suddenly asked if Warwickshire had the honour of being his father as well as Shakespeare's.

"No, sir," replied the gentleman, "I am from Essex."

"Ah," replied Foote, remembering that Essex was a county famous for its cattle, "from Essex indeed! and who drove you?"

The Duke of Cumberland also had a somewhat nasty experience of the actor's wit. Going round behind one night to see him before the performance, he said politely, "Here I am, Foote, ready as usual to swallow all your good things."

"Indeed," was Foote's reply, "then your Royal Highness must have a mighty good digestion, for you never bring any up again."

When his friend Sir Francis Delaval died Foote burst into tears, but smiled again when they told him that the surgeons were going to examine the baronet's head. "It's useless," he said; "I've known it for years, and have never been able to find anything whatever in it."

No man ever lived who could snub a bore better than Foote. One day while at Bath a pompous old doctor took him aside and confided to him that it was his intention to publish his own poems. "But, sir," he went on, "I have already so many irons in the fire that I really don't know what to do." "Take my advice," said Foote confidentially, "and put your poems where the irons are." One of Foote's company was perpetually humming the same air, and the manager asked him why the deuce he did it. "The fact is, Mr. Foote," said the actor, "it haunts me." "And small wonder,"

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replied Foote, "seeing that you are for ever murdering it."

Despite Foote's ready wit he was extremely sensitive, especially to criticism, and a bad notice was a thing he dreaded and disliked more than anything else. He never forgave Dr. Johnson for saying that he was an infidel "as a dog is an infidel"; and he begged the Duchess of Kingston to stop the attacks made upon him in the Press, promising to suppress "The Trip to Calais" if she would do so.

Despite his unconquerable jealousy of Garrick, the great Roscius had much affection for him, and said that he was "a man of wonderful abilities, and the most entertaining companion I have ever known." Garrick was much delighted when Foote put a bust of him in his private room. "Ah, I see," he said, laughing, "you are not afraid to put me close to your gold and bank-notes." "Well, you see, David," was the rejoinder, "you've got no hands." One day when Garrick and Foote were out walking the latter dropped a guinea. "Where the deuce can it have gone to?" he said after a few minutes' search. "To the devil," suggested Garrick. "Trust you, David," replied Foote, "for making a guinea go farther than any one else." Another day, when Foote and Garrick were out walking together, a sweep rode by on a thoroughbred horse. "There goes Warburton on Shakespeare," cried Foote.

Perhaps one of his best mots was when Mr. Howard told him that he was going to publish a second edition of "Thoughts and Maxims." "Yes," was Foote's comment, "second thoughts are always best." When Foote was told that the Rockingham Cabinet was exhausted, he remarked that it was certainly not the length of its journey that had fatigued it.

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One night Foote had very much the better of Macklin. The latter declared at his tavern that he had brought his memory to such a pitch of perfection, that he could repeat anything after once hearing it, whereupon Foote promptly handed him Johnson's famous sentence beginning, "So she went into the garden to cut a cabbage leaf to make an apple pie; and at the same time a great she-bear coming up the street, &c." Macklin "retired hurt," and was never heard to boast of his memory again.

Macklin was "scored off" by Foote on yet another occasion. A number of people were collected at Macklin's tavern to hear the actor lecture, Foote being among the company. Foote was very noisy, and his interruption annoyed the lecturer considerably. "Cannot you remain silent!" cried Macklin; "do you know what I am going to say?"

"Gad no," answered Foote, "do you?"

Foote's wit could often be brutal as well as rude. One night when Digges made his first appearance in London in "Cato" at the Haymarket under George Colman the elder's management, the actor dressed the part after the manner adopted by Booth when the piece was originally produced, the costume including what was known as a "shape" decorated with gilt leather upon a black ground, with black stockings, black gloves, and a powdered periwig. Digges stalked on in this extraordinary costume, and met with a hearty reception from the audience. Foote, who was in the pit, waited until the applause had died down, and then exclaimed in what was supposed to be an undertone, though every one around could hear it, "A Roman chimney-sweeper on May-day!" The pit roared, and poor Digges—old stager as he was, for he had been long in the provinces—very nearly "dried up" altogether.

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Foote tried a joke on the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was not to be caught. The actor forwarded a copy of "The Minor" to the Primate (a play so gross and indecent that Irish audiences would have none of it, though it was a big success in England), with the polite request that if His Grace saw anything objectionable in it he would strike it out. But the Archbishop sent it back without a mark, and declared afterwards to a friend that if he had put a pen to the manuscript Foote would straightway have advertised it "as corrected and prepared for the stage by His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury." And, judging by what history tells us of Foote's character, he probably would.

It was Foote's inordinate vanity that cost him the loss of a leg. He was staying with Lord Mexborough, among whose other guests was the Duke of York. One night after dinner he openly boasted of his horsemanship, which was distinctly inferior to his acting. A horse was promised him for the hunt next day, and being too proud to back out of it, he mounted his steed and rode off with the rest. But the moment hounds found, Foote was thrown and broke his leg in two places. The surgeon found amputation necessary, and it must be put down to Foote's credit that he bore his loss with great pluck, declaring soon after the operation that he was really not sorry, for he would be able to caricature the one-legged George Faulkner of Dublin absolutely to the life.

"Make no allusion to my weakest part," he said to some one who had the bad taste to chaff him about his lost leg; "did I ever attack your head?"

But the loss of his leg brought him great good fortune, and earned for the Little Theatre the new title of Theatre Royal, which it has borne ever since. For

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the Duke of York was so sorry for poor Foote that he obtained for him the patent of the theatre, together with a licence to open from the 15th of May to the 15th of September. Foote thereupon bought the lease of the new premises, incorporated a house in Little Suffolk Street, removed two shops which were in front in the Haymarket, built a portico, and added a second gallery. Thus improved and enlarged, and with its Royal Patent, the Haymarket literally boomed, and in 1768, when Foote produced his "Devil on Two Sticks," he cleared close on £4000, scarcely a penny of which was left by the end of the year. In this piece he caricatured the President of the College of Physicians, who took the joke so well that he sent Foote his muff, an article that the actor had forgotten as being specially characteristic of the good-natured doctor.

Foote's wooden leg does not appear to have incommoded him to any important degree, for he managed to get about the stage with almost as much agility as ever, but it must have been a pathetic sight to see the actor leaning against the wall of his dressing-room while his "dresser" arranged the artificial member to suit the rest of the costume that his master was wearing. Indeed, it would appear that it was only at such times that Foote felt his loss at all keenly, though it undoubtedly hastened his end. Colman describes how he once visited Foote, and found the leg "standing by his bedside, ready dressed in a handsome silk stocking with a polished shoe and gold buckle awaiting the owner's getting up." It was hardly necessary for Colman to add that "it had a kind of tragi-comical appearance."

Foote had a stroke of paralysis in 1777, and was advised to get change of air and scene on the Continent, but got no farther than Dover, where he died, with a



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joke on his lips, on the 21st of October. He was buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey.

Some six months before his death Foote handed over the Little Theatre to the elder Colman for an annuity of £1600, but he lived only long enough to get one half-year's dividend, so that Colman got the whole concern for a paltry £800.

Whatever Foote's personal character may have been—and his faults were as numerous as his plays—one scarce dare think what the Little Theatre in the Haymarket would have become without him. Not only did he, as a "popularity-monger"—as he called himself—bring it into prominence, but he reconstructed it and secured for it the Royal Patent that changed its name to the title it bears to-day. Though his dramatic zeal was neither of the highest nor the purest, his satires were always crammed full of wit, and they were often funniest when in their worst taste.

He does not seem to have been an unkind manager, for he gave considerable encouragement to Charles Bannister of the fortunate throat, whose habits o' nights were scarcely conducive to singing at the very early hour at which Foote began his performances. "I am all right at night," said the unfortunate Charles to his manager, "but neither I nor my voice can get up in the morning." Foote so enjoyed the joke that he gave Bannister every encouragement—good nature which led to that actor achieving a big success, though he came a tremendous cropper over the Royalty Theatre just as he was on the highroad to a considerable fortune. But even in the midst of his greatest difficulties Bannister "would have his little joke." All the world was talking of the death of Sir Theodosius Boughton, who was poisoned by laurel-water. "Don't talk to me of laurel-leaves," said Bannister; "I fear

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none but a bailiff (bay-leaf).” A story of Bannister’s son will also bear repetition: “Jack,” said his father one day when the boy had annoyed him, “I’ll cut you off with a shilling.” “I wish, father,” replied his son, “that you’d give it me now.”

John Palmer made his *début* at the Haymarket with Charles Bannister, and two more nervous actors probably never trod the boards for the first time. But with experience success came to Palmer too, though, like Bannister, his circumstances were nearly always embarrassing. At one time so hard pressed was he that he had to live in his dressing-room at the theatre, and on another occasion, when having to leave Drury Lane to play a season at the Haymarket, he was conveyed thither in a cabinet among a cartload of scenery to avoid arrest!

One day Palmer was in his garden at Kentish Town when a wasp stung him in the eye so badly that he had to send his excuses to the theatre. The manager went on and apologised for the actor’s absence, but the audience would have none of his excuses, and so great was the clamour that there was nothing for it but to make an attempt to fetch Palmer to the theatre despite his accident. Palmer came and went on the stage just as he was. He was greeted with a fire of orange peel and a storm of hisses by the audience, exasperated at being kept waiting. At last they allowed Palmer to speak.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” said he, “I am aware of the odd effect my appearance here may produce after the apology which has been made for my illness, which I thought it hardly possible to describe by communication to the theatre. The fact is, ladies and gentlemen, my illness was all my eye!”

Palmer was notoriously unpunctual, his pet excuse

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being that his wife had been confined, but he made the excuse so often that it was calculated that the good lady became a mother at least once a quarter ! More than once, too, he shammed illness, sometimes not sending his excuses to the theatre until the last moment, and that on a first night. He was once very nearly caught by Sheridan, who called with Kelly to inquire after the actor's health. Luckily Kelly preceded Sheridan up the stairs, and was just in time to tip Palmer the wink and keep Sheridan outside until the truant had rolled himself in a dressing-gown in the simulated agonies of toothache. So well did he act that Sheridan was much impressed, and begged him to take the greatest care of himself. Palmer's father was a bill-sticker. One evening when the actor was strutting about the green-room in a pair of glittering buckles, some one remarked that they looked like real diamonds. "Sir," said the actor, much annoyed, "I never wear anything else but real diamonds." "Pardon me," was the answer, "I remember when you were nothing but paste." "Why don't you stick him against the wall?" whispered Bannister.

He was the most casual of actors. One night he had to speak a prologue, not one word of which he had committed to memory. Luckily there was an uproar among the audience, of which Palmer took immediate advantage. He gesticulated wildly, moved his lips, but spoke not a word. Then when silence was more or less restored he pretended to stop speaking and gazed reproachfully at the audience, who promptly divided themselves into two parties and stormed at one another. In the midst of this fresh row Palmer pretended to finish his prologue, and bowed himself out before the lull came. He was called "Plausible Jack." "Plausible indeed," he said one day. "The only plausible thing

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I ever did was to persuade a bailiff once to bail me." Palmer fell dead on the stage in the middle of "The Stranger."

A great favourite in Foote's company, especially with Royalty, was Parsons, who, like Arthur Roberts, loved nothing better than to make the other people on the stage with him laugh by saying some absurd thing in an undertone. Parsons took great liberties with his audiences, no matter what their composition. One night George III. commanded a performance of "The Siege of Calais." In this Parsons played the chief carpenter, who after erecting the scaffold for the execution of the patriots, has to say, "So the King is coming. An the King like not my scaffold, I am no true man." But instead of speaking this line Parsons went close to the Royal box and shouted, "An the King were here and did not like my scaffold I would say, Damn him, he has no taste!"

It is on record, strange to say, that no one enjoyed this extraordinary sally more than His Majesty himself.

Four days after Parsons died his wife married their son's tutor, so that she had the somewhat remarkable experience of having two husbands in the house at the same time—one dead, the other living. Parsons lived for many years in a tiny house near the Lambeth Asylum, which he called Frog Hall, owing to its being opposite to a stagnant ditch.

Baddeley, whose Twelfth Night cake, for which he left £100 in the three per cents. in order that it might be "partaken of annually for ever," is still eaten annually at Drury Lane, was another member of Foote's company. Before he went to the Haymarket he is supposed to have had the honour of being Foote's cook. This story is borne out by Foote's remark when Baddeley challenged him to a duel with

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swords. "Here's a pretty fellow," said the great actor; "I allow him to take my spit and stick it by his side, and now he wants to stick me with it."

Shuter, too, played under Foote's management. He was an extremely droll actor, whose chief fault was his excessive love of the bottle. When hissed for his performance in "Wife in the Right," he excused himself to the audience on the plea that he had been too ill to attend the rehearsals. "But," he added, "if there be any one here who would like to know whether I was drunk three days before, I acknowledge that I was, and beg pardon for that." No one, not even Shuter himself, knew who his parents were, and he is supposed to have owed his success in life to remembering when a pot-boy at an inn the number of a hackney coach in which a customer had left his pocket-book. So pleased was the customer upon regaining his property that he sent the boy to be properly educated. He loved low company, and thoroughly enjoyed displaying his talents to the denizens of St. Giles. His wit was very ready. One day a friend, seeing him stare vacantly in front of him, asked him if he had bottled his eyes. "Yes," answered Shuter, "and I'm shortly going to cork my eyebrows." At a dinner party one night he sat very silent, to the great disappointment of the company. "Come, Mr. Shuter," said one of the exasperated guests at length, "when are you going to begin to be comical?" "Gad," said Shuter, "I've forgotten my fool's dress. Will you be my substitute while I go and fetch it?" The guest agreed, whereupon Shuter took up his hat and stick, and left altogether.

Quick, the original Tony Lumpkin, was George III.'s favourite comedian, and a very popular member of Foote's company. He was a vain little fellow, who believed in no one but himself, and could not bear to



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hear of any new player acting one of his "creations." Foote he literally loathed. Quick played for thirty-six years, and retired with £10,000 in his pocket. Until the last day of his life he fully believed that had he secured an opportunity of speaking to George III. alone, His Majesty would have made his daughter a maid of honour. The belief arose from an incident which occurred to Miss Quick when of a very tender age. She was walking in the Park with her father when George III. with a military escort passed by. The child, frightened by the noise and the display, tried to escape by the railings, but stuck fast half-way through. The King, hearing the noise of the child's yells, inquired what the matter was. Quick, who by this time had extricated his offspring, explained. "Good girl," said His Majesty, "don't cry, don't cry." And to still further soothe her, added, "Be a good girl, and you shall be a maid of honour when you're old enough."

## CHAPTER IV

WHEN Foote was negotiating the disposal of the patent of the Haymarket Theatre he had no idea that he was dealing with his old friend George Colman, the business being contracted through an agent. "There's a fat-headed fellow of an agent who has been boring me every morning at breakfast with terms from some blockhead who knows nothing about the stage, but whose money burns in his pocket," Foote said to Colman one day, adding that "of course nobody can conduct so peculiar a theatrical business as mine but myself."

"Playhouse mad, I suppose," replied Colman sympathetically.

"Just so," said Foote; "and if bleeding will bring him to his senses, he'll find me a devilish good doctor."

Foote's face when he met Colman a few days afterwards to sign the deed can be better imagined than described!

In addition to an agreement to pay Foote £1600 for life, Colman also arranged to pay for his services as an actor, and to give him £500 for the copyright of his unpublished dramatic pieces. The patent allowed him to open the theatre from the 15th of May to the 15th of September. With the theatre Colman also took over the effects, which seem to have been but a sorry lot. Foote's wardrobe, indeed, can scarcely have deserved

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the title, for the stock consisted entirely of a few old coats and waistcoats. For, however careful the English Aristophanes may have been about his own appearance on the stage, the costume of his brother actors troubled him not at all. "So vilely did some of the apparel fit the actors," says George Colman the younger, "that he (Foote) was often obliged to make a joke of the disgrace, and get a start of the audience if he could, in a laugh against his own tatterdemalions." One unfortunate member of the company, who was extremely thin—a sort of living skeleton—was provided with a coat which would have done honour to the handsome proportions of my good friend Harry Keble. Foote always addressed this personage during the play as "the Gentleman with the sleeves." Foote's own dresses were always *hired*, as indeed was the music for the band.

Foote only played twice under George Colman's management, though the play-bills show that he was advertised several times afterwards. But his health had broken down so utterly that he could muster no more strength to tread the boards, and his death followed shortly afterwards.

George Colman the elder met with little success on his first attempt to attract the public to the Haymarket. Contrary to the good judgment that he afterwards exercised, he insisted on opening the theatre before Drury Lane and Covent Garden had closed their doors. Having nothing in particular with which to attract the public, empty houses were the rule, and the notice went up a few days after the advertising of the first performance. Ten days or so later, however, Colman reopened again, "showing" every night instead of every alternate night, as Foote had done.

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Every one prophesied failure for Colman, but he knew his own business better than they did, and three new stars, whom he introduced to the British public in the persons of the famous Henderson, Edwin, and Miss Farren, soon made the people and the money flow in. Colman had indeed a splendid company. In addition to the three great players I have just mentioned, Palmer and Parsons were also members of his company, as well as the elder Bannister, who was in fine voice, and Digges, whom Foote insulted so grossly on his appearance as Cato. Foote, by the way, watched Colman's success with very jealous eyes. One day not long before his death he came into the theatre when a rehearsal was in progress. "How do you go on?" he asked. "Pretty well," replied Colman, "but I can't teach one of these fellows to gape as he ought to." "Can't you?" sneered Foote; "then read him your last comedy—and he'll yawn for a month!"

Not long after Colman took the theatre he set about making some exceedingly necessary structural alterations. One of the most essential was an approach to the boxes, which in Foote's time were practically flush with the street, so much so that the unfortunate people who sat in them often lost the thread of the plot they were following owing to the disturbing noises of such things as post-horns and news-sellers' voices, to say nothing of the rattle of hackney coaches and other distracting influences. Colman also did not a little in the way of much-needed decoration, for the improvident Foote had left the theatre in anything but an elegant condition.

But, even after the carpenter and decorator had left it, the theatre can scarcely have been a temple of ease and luxury, and a County Council inspector would

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probably have fallen dead at the sight of it. What would have happened had it been set on fire by the genial young bucks of the day it is scarcely difficult, though it is decidedly unpleasant, to imagine. But Colman had no County Council to put him right, and made no attempt to enlarge his passages, which, his son says, were so narrow that when two stout gentlemen happened to meet in one of them and tried to pass each other there was great danger of their sticking fast. "I often thought," the younger Colman wrote, "during my own possession of the diminutive theatre, it would be better to furnish my side-box customers with a bell to tie round their necks at the pay door of the house, on the same principle as that of providing waggon horses with such tinkling apparatus—to give notice of their approach and prevent confusion and jostling in cross lanes." The audience, however, did not seem to mind much, for they could see and hear, which, apparently, was more than they could do at the new Drury Lane and Covent Garden, "those covered Salisbury plains," in which it was suggested that

"'Twere better they began  
On the new invented plan,  
And with telegraph transmitted us the plot."

One word more as to these audiences. Like the theatre they had greatly improved, though they were to show at the beginning of the next century by the O. P. Riots that there was a good deal of the old Adam still left in them. But by the time the elder Colman took over the reins of the "Little Theatre" considerable improvement had taken place in the playgoer's manners. Their comparative banishment from the stage they bore with good temper; and if they were far more ready to express their opinion (especially their



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bad opinion) than are the audiences of 1903, they had learned to do so in a more decent manner, and the elder Colman was able to open his theatre night after night without fear of having it half demolished or set alight. The servants, however, still seem to have given trouble, as a letter dated 1737, and published in a contemporary journal, clearly shows. The letter runs: "Theatricus requests the manager of the Theatre Royal in the Haymarket would give orders to the boxkeepers that the servants who are sent to keep places do take off their hats, as their wearing them is an indecency suffered in no theatre out of England." In George III. the drama generally had a good friend and a most appreciative audience, though His Majesty infinitely preferred comedy to tragedy. When Henderson made his appearance at Covent Garden as the hero of "The Mysterious Husband," George III. was so overcome by the death scene that he turned his back on the stage, exclaiming, "Charlotte, don't look, it's too much to bear." By Royal command the play was never repeated!

The young King of Denmark, however, who married George III.'s sister, and was a great playgoer when in this country, was scarcely so sensitive as his brother-in-law, for he frequently fell fast asleep during the performance. Mrs. Bellamy was so annoyed at his inattention that one night having to speak the line, "O thou false lord!" she went as close as she could get to the King's box, and literally yelled the words into the Royal ear. Her energy had the effect of rousing His Majesty to some show of attention.

A distracting feature of the audience of the time was the attention paid to the reigning belles who graced the theatre with their presence, though advantage was often taken of the interest they induced to

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advertise their coming well beforehand. But take it all in all, a decided improvement had set in as regards the playgoing public, an improvement which continued until it culminated in the almost perfect playgoer of to-day. Let me take this opportunity of offering the thanks I owe him—and her.

*Place aux dames.*—So among George Colman's bright particular stars who brought good fortune to the renovated Little Theatre first attention must be paid to Miss Farren, who in less than a score of years after her London début as Miss Hardcastle in "She Stoops to Conquer" was to become the Countess of Derby, and to retire from the stage at the height of her triumphal career.

Though not coming of a theatrical stock, Elizabeth Farren caught stage fever from her eccentric and not over fortunate father, who started life as a surgeon, and threw his knife out of the window to manage a strolling company. His little daughter first appeared as Columbine at Wakefield, where she was seen by a Liverpool manager, who, recognising her talent and appreciating her beauty, took her to Cottonopolis and brought her out in his theatre, much to the detriment of the hearts of half the youths in that city. But Elizabeth Farren was too clever and too lovely to stay long in the provinces, and an engagement offered by George Colman the elder led to her first appearance in London at the Haymarket. She became a favourite almost from the day she first curtsied to an audience, and Colman soon found that he had indeed made a good dip in the provincial lucky tub. Miss Farren was a *grande dame* by nature, and very few actresses have queened it upon the stage to better effect than she. She was tall and slight, with a particularly lovely expression, and her manner of speaking and general

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refinement were such, that she was soon as great a favourite in society as on the stage.

She was given the honour of managing the private theatricals at the Duke of Richmond's, where two men promptly fell in love with her in the shape of Fox and the Earl of Derby. Lord Derby's affection was returned, but there was a stumbling-block to their marriage in the shape of a living Countess. So Lord Derby and Elizabeth Farren waited for an end which was delayed for many years.

With what their relationship was during that delay I have nothing to do. Scandal-mongers said one thing, and fervent admirers gave them the lie. Walpole wrote: "Miss Farren is as excellent as Mrs. Oldfield, because she has lived with the best style of men in England," but this was not necessarily a reflection upon her character. Mrs. Inchbald has told a story which, though scandalous, is too good not to be repeated. One night one of the ladies at the Haymarket, of, I regret to say, extremely bad repute, met with some accident in her dressing-room and sought the shelter of Mrs. Wells's, the latter lady being the mistress of a certain well-known officer of the day. But Mrs. Wells was so shocked at the intrusion of such a disreputable character that she ran to Miss Farren's room for protection. Whereupon Miss Farren flounced out of her apartment, exclaiming, "What would Lord Derby say if I should be seen in such company?" The degrees of morality are distinctly interesting,

*Se non è vero, è ben trovato.*

But whatever her previous character, Elizabeth Farren became Countess of Derby on the 8th of April 1797, exactly six weeks after the death of her predecessor to the title. She made her final bow to a

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theatrical audience on the day preceding the nuptials, playing Lady Teazle with much effect, though she broke down at the lines, "Let me also request, Lady Sneerwell, that you will make my respects to the scandalous college of which you are a member, and inform them that Lady Teazle, licentiate, begs leave to return the diploma they granted her, as she leaves off practice and kills characters no longer." At the end of the piece the future Countess was led forward, while one of the actors addressed the audience thus—

"But, ah ! this night adieu the mournful mien,  
When Mirth's loved favourite quits the mimic's scene !  
Startled Thalia would assent refuse,  
But Truth and Virtue wooed and won the Muse."

In taking John Henderson from Bath to make his début at the Little Theatre in no less a character than that of Shylock, George Colman the elder made yet another fortunate dip in the provincial lucky tub. The engagement was made in the face of Henderson's previous rejection at the hands of two other London managers, and despite a howl of scorn from Garrick, who, jealous actor that he always was, surely never betrayed more jealousy than in the case of the young actor from Bath. From the day that Henderson first made up his mind to tread the boards for a living he was a fervent admirer of the "theatrical monarch," and by constant practice imitated him to perfection. But this accomplishment was no particular help towards getting the engagement at Drury Lane that he coveted so much. However, after some difficulty he managed to get a few moments with one Hiffernan, a hanger-on of Garrick's, who immediately asked him to be so good as to "please to stand upon his pins." Henderson got up. "Now," said Hiffer-

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nan, "we'll soon see whether you'll make an actor." Whereupon he attached an old table-knife to a piece of string, and getting the former level with Henderson's head, let it fall to the ground. This performance over, he proceeded solemnly to measure the length of the string with a two-foot rule.

Having done this, Hiffernan shook his head sadly : "Young gentleman," he remarked, "I am sorry to mortify you, but go your ways home, set your thought on something else, mind your business, be what you will. For the sock and buskin you won't do—you will not do, sir, by an inch and a quarter."

Discouraged but not deterred from his purpose, Henderson looked for another London engagement, but finding none applied to Garrick again. Garrick made him rehearse, and at the close dismissed him with a wave of his hand. "You have too much wool or worsted in your mouth," he said. "You must get rid of this before you are fit for Drury Lane stage." Henderson, however, was revenged on Garrick for this sally, for upon the great actor hearing that "the player from Bath" could imitate him to the life, he invited him to his house. "Do, my dear sir, let me hear what I am," asked Garrick at dessert. Henderson demurred, but was persuaded. The company were delighted at the imitation and roared with laughter, but Garrick was furious. "Egad," he said, "if that be my voice I have never known it myself ; it is certainly dissimilar to everything I conceived of mine." From that moment Garrick had no good word for Henderson. He declared that he had heard that he "swallowed his part like an eager glutton, and spewed his undigested fragments in the face of the audience." He called his Don John "a comic Cato," and his Hamlet "a mixture of tragedy and comedy, pastoral farce and nonsense."



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In fact, nothing was bad enough for the man who had so successfully "taken him off."

But Henderson weathered the storm of Garrick's cruel sarcasm, and attained the object of his desire with his engagement by the elder Colman. The manager insisted upon his making his first appearance as Shylock, fearing lest his somewhat awkward, ungainly presence, which would be little noticed in the Jew's cloak, might not otherwise be appreciated by the audience. Henderson was an instantaneous success, and even Macklin approved the performance, though some time before he had told the young actor that he had to unlearn everything he had learned. "And yet, sir," said the modest Henderson, as he thanked the old actor for his words of praise, "I have never had the advantage of seeing you in the character."—"Sir, it is not necessary to tell me that," replied Macklin. "I knew you had not, or you would have played it differently."

Lord Camden wrote to Garrick after the performance to say that "your Birmingham counterfeit has stolen your buskin and runs away with all your applause into the bargain; but I shall soon see him stripped to the skin and exposed in all his Scotch nakedness. I hope your friend Colman is not privy to the trash we see every day in the papers to put off this clumsy fellow." But the opinion of the general public did not coincide with his lordship's (which was intended to curry favour with Garrick), for Henderson became the darling of the Little Theatre, and was accepted with rapture even in the character of the "handsome hero," which in appearance he certainly was not. What he possessed was that true dramatic fire that all the criticism and all the sneers and all the bad luck can never quench.

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He only played one season at the Little Theatre, but he brought money to the elder Colman's coffers to such good effect that a benefit (which was not bargained for in his agreement) was given him. At the close of the evening the treasurer handed him the bill for "house charges," with Mr. Colman's compliments. It ran thus—

£	s.	d.
0	0	0

A pretty, tasteful compliment !

Henderson, if not really a great actor, deserves the adjective remarkable. He was ungainly of figure, with legs and arms too short for his body ; he had an unmelodious voice and an awkward trick of spreading the palms of his hands outwards, and he had picked up some bad mannerisms on the Bath stage. But his memory was prodigious, and if any one read a passage from some book to him, he could at once repeat it with perfect ease. When cast for a new part, he read the whole play, learned his part, read the piece again, and then never troubled himself any more about it until a fortnight before the production. Contrary to the usual custom of an actor, he was in the habit of "doing himself extremely well" at dinner on a first night, sitting over his wine until summoned to the theatre. One day a friend persuaded him that this was a mistake, and when a new piece was put on Henderson fed frugally beforehand. The result was a failure, for he is said to have simply "walked through" his part that night. He died at the age of forty.

In the same company with Henderson and Miss Farren was John Edwin, who from all accounts must have been one of the most humorous actors the Haymarket has ever known. No actor has in all probability

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got on more intimate terms with his audience than this excellent comedian. He never played *with* his fellow-actors, but devoted his entire attention to the front of the house—a method which, though in direct contravention of all theatrical laws, seems to have amused the public immensely. What he said to the audience did not matter to him in the least. He would appear on the stage exceedingly tipsy ; he would forget his words altogether—they forgave him everything.

One night when playing Bowkit in “ The Son-in-law,” in which Cranky declines to accept him as a son-in-law on account of his ugliness, Edwin pronounced the word “ ugly ” in tones of great surprise, and going close to the footlights addressed the audience thus : “ Now, I submit to the decision of an enlightened British public, which is the ugliest fellow of the three—I, old Cranky, or that gentleman in the first row of the balcony box ? ”

As a matter of fact Edwin was a good-looking fellow, with a naturally comical face—an asset by no means to be despised. His byplay appears to have been quite extraordinary, and Henderson relates how when playing Sir Hugh Evans, Edwin kept the house in howls of laughter for several minutes without speaking a word. He was probably the best burletta singer that ever lived, and some one once said that whenever Edwin died O’Keefe, who owed not a little of his success to the actor’s talent, would be damned. Edwin’s great failing was his love of brandy. “ Had he but imitated the habit that christened him,” said Boaden, when writing of his Tipple in “ The Flitch of Bacon,” “ he might long have continued the most diverting creature the modern stage has known.”

Another extremely humorous and clever member of the elder Colman’s company was the Bannister of whom

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I have already given an anecdote. Jack Bannister began his stage career in tragedy under the great Garrick, but after a while he grew tired of serious parts, and declared his desire for comedy. "No, no," said Garrick, "you may humbug the town some time longer as a tragedian, but comedy is a serious thing." However, it was in comedy that Bannister was to make a big success, though it can fairly be said of him that he was bad in nothing. He was just the opposite of Edwin in that he never paid any attention to his audience, and no applause, however loud, ever made him forget for an instant the part he was playing. He was extremely good-looking, and a great favourite with every one. "I was determined to go through life without enemies," he boasted when an old man, "and I have done so," which was perfectly true. In fact it is on record that "Handsome Jack," as he was called, only lost his temper once, and that when a critic slated him for a bad performance when he was really too ill to act. Bannister marked the gentleman's features.

Bannister was an intimate friend of the younger Colman, who writes of him with a very real affection. He was singularly fortunate in his married life, and when he retired from the stage he had sufficient means to end his days in comfort. "They say it is my wife who has taken care of my money, and made me comfortable in my old age," he remarked one day, "and so she has. But I think I deserve a little credit, for I let her!" From his father he inherited a charming voice and genial manners that made everybody like him. He was fond of good living and did not despise the cup, but it was not often that he looked upon the wine when it was red. One night at Stratford-on-Avon, however, the bottle was sent round once too

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often for him, and in his alcoholic joy he insisted upon flinging himself upon the bed upon which Shakespeare was supposed to have been born. His raptures were cut short, however, by the discovery that the bard's couch was occupied by two diminutive children, whom he nearly succeeded in smothering!

I have left to the last lines of this chapter any account of the career of the elder Colman, not that the story of his life is not full of interest, but that, save as regards his management of the Little Theatre, a detailed account of it has no right place among these records and reminiscences. Long before the elder Colman secured the patent of the Haymarket from Foote he was known to theatrical fame as one of the most brilliant dramatic authors of his day, and the intimate friend of David Garrick—a friendship which resulted in, and was broken by, “The Clandestine Marriage,” a comedy not unknown to the patrons of the Haymarket Theatre in this year of grace. The elder Colman, too, was at one time part proprietor of Covent Garden Theatre, and it may fairly be said that, though his management of the Little Theatre was both creditable and successful, it formed a less interesting part of his life than the twenty years or so that preceded it. This was no doubt largely due to the fact that he was never quite the same man after the fit that seized him in 1771, though he did much excellent work between that year and 1794, when he died. In 1789, just twelve years after he opened as manager of the Little Theatre, he was seized with paralysis, and soon afterwards his mind became affected, until at last it was found necessary to send him to a home at Paddington. His death came as a merciful relief, though his loss was keenly felt by his son George, who had followed so closely in his footsteps that he was able to



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manage his father's affairs most skilfully during the trying period that preceded the elder Colman's death.

George Colman the elder was not originally intended for a theatrical career. On the death of his parents, William Pulteney, afterwards Earl of Bath, who always called him by the nickname of "Coley," took charge of him and sent him to Westminster, where he soon showed what clever stuff he was made of by being at the head of the list of those scholars who were sent to Oxford. At the 'Varsity he began to show his taste for the theatre, much to the distress of Lord Bath, who had decided that the Bar was to be his profession. But like so many before and after him, though he ate his dinners and secured freedom for one or two clients, the wig and gown were not his costume. The success of a satire called "Polly Honeycombe," produced by Garrick, was too much for him, and he gave up the writing of opinions for plays, with what success all the world knows. This being anything but a serious treatise, I will give no list of his plays nor comment on his wit, his satire, and his faculty of construction. It is enough to say that more than one of his comedies would play as well to-day as they did in those bygone days of the Little Theatre.

Colman was the first manager of the Haymarket to form a stock company "to act in all branches of the drama," which, indeed, was a revolution when one thinks of Foote's management, during which "The British Aristophanes" scarcely played anything but his own pieces, and was hardly ever "out of the bill." Tragedy, comedy, burlesque, and what the younger Colman called "fiddle faddle farces," succeeded each other in the programmes, and so well did George Colman cater for the public taste, that he actually played to twenty pounds during the great Riots!

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Colman also possessed what I might call a stock dramatist in the person of William O'Keefe, who fitted Edwin and Parsons so excellently with parts, that it would have been difficult to say whether the actors owed more to the author than the author to the players. O'Keefe first came into contact with Colman in 1777 by sending the latter an anonymous play, with the request that "should he disapprove of it he would have it left at the bar of the Grecian coffee-house directed to 'A. B.,' and if he liked it well enough to promise he would bring it out, that he should send an answer as above." The next morning on O'Keefe's arrival at the coffee-house he found a friendly letter from Colman promising to produce his play the following summer, and making an appointment for the next day. The two soon became intimate friends, and O'Keefe's plays became the *plats-du-jour* of the Haymarket Theatre. O'Keefe also wrote for Covent Garden and Drury Lane. At the former theatre his opera, "The Banditti," was a failure. "It was cut too much," said a sympathetic friend at Colman's house one day. "Yes," replied Colman, "but who was the cutter? Not the cutter of Colman Street."

O'Keefe had a very sincere affection for Colman *père et fils*, and has spoken of them in his reminiscences as being most kind and liberal. The younger he describes as "a true chip of the old block," and that the description fitted him is, I think, proved in the next chapter, which is all his own.

Another famous dramatist whom the elder Colman encouraged was Mrs. Inchbald, whose connection with the Haymarket Theatre began with an engagement at the munificent salary of thirty shillings a week. It was not, however, as actress but as dramatist that she was to make her name, and she wrote several

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pieces for the theatre, beginning with "The Mogul Tale," out of which she netted exactly £100. Her first comedy Colman himself named, calling it "I'll tell you what," for want, apparently, of a better title, though he made excellent play with the name in both the prologue and epilogue with which he honoured it. Besides being a clever and very charming lady, Mrs. Inchbald was remarkable for the fact that her beauty and her talents brought her more proposals per annum than most ladies are honoured with in a lifetime.

The following, which I found in an old press-cutting book, shows the receipts and expenses during the first year (1777) of the elder Colman's management. The figures are distinctly interesting, and, needless to say, differ considerably from those of the twentieth century. A West-End theatre at £210 a year would be a delightful novelty nowadays. I copy the extract just as I found it :—

*From Haymarket Books 1777. Whole Rec.  
of Season £8975.*

Foote for his unpublished Pieces . . .	£500	0	0
„ „ six nights performance . . .	232	19	6
„ „ half a year's annuity . . .	800	0	0
Henderson on acct. . . . .	100	0	0
Parsons—Season . . . . .	101	0	0
$\frac{1}{2}$ Year's Rent . . . . .	105	0	0
Land Tax . . . . .	15	0	0
For 3 Houses . . . . .	100	0	0
O'Hara author . . . . .	200	0	0
7 Years Insurance to 1784 . . .	29	0	9
Licence for Theatre at West Sessions . .	3	13	6

From this same old book I may, perhaps, be permitted to reproduce part of the prologue written by the elder Colman on the opening of his manage-

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ment on the 15th of May 1777. It was spoken by Palmer:—

“ . . . While two great warehouses for winter use,  
Eight months huge Bales of Merchandise produce,  
Out with the Swallows comes our Summer Bayes  
To shew his Taffeta and Lutestring Plays ;  
A choice assortment of light goods prepares,  
The smallest haberdasher of small wares,  
In Laputa we're told a grave Projector  
—A mighty schemer, like our new Director—  
Once formed a plan—and 'twas a deep one, Sirs,  
To draw the sunbeams out of cucumbers.  
So whilst less vent'rous managers retire,  
Our Salamander thinks to live in Fire.  
A Playhouse Quidnunc—and no Quidnunc's wiser—  
Reading our play-bills in the *Advertiser*,  
Cries, 'Hey ! what here ! In the Haymarket a play,  
To sweat the Publick in the midst of May ?  
Give me fresh air !' Then goes and pouts alone  
In country lodgings : by the two-mile Stone  
There sits, and chews the cud of his Disgust,  
Broil'd in the Sun and blinded by the dust.

. . . . .  
Now with the napkin underneath the chin,  
Unbutton'd Cits their Little Feast begin,  
And plunge full knuckle-deep through thick and thin,  
Throw down Fish, Flesh, Fowl, Pastry, Custard Jelly,  
And make a Salmagundy of their belly.  
' More chian pepper—Punch another Rummer,  
So Cool and Pleasant—eating in the summer !'  
To ancient Geographers it was known  
Mortals could live beneath the Torrid Zone ;  
But we, who toiling underneath the Line,  
Must make our Hay now while the weather's fine.  
Your good old Haymarker, long here employed,  
The sunshine of your smiles who still enjoyed,  
The fields which long he mowed will not forsake,  
Nor quite forego the Scythe, the Fork and Rake,  
But take the Field, even in the hottest day,  
And kindly help us to get in our Hay.”







LISTON AS "MOLL FLAGGON" IN "THE LORD  
OF THE MANOR"

PLATE II

## CHAPTER V

My excuse for devoting the whole of this chapter to the younger Colman is to be found in the fact that he was most certainly bred, if not born, in the Haymarket Theatre, that his first play was produced there, and that in after years he became first manager on his father's behalf, whose mind had become affected, and afterwards proprietor and manager on his own account. Moreover, quite apart from his long connection with the Haymarket Theatre, George Colman (as I shall hereafter call him) had talent and interest enough in himself to deserve the space allotted to him, the more especially seeing that that space is filled by the pen of one who has humbly followed in his footsteps more than a century after he first looked after the affairs of the Little Theatre. As for the players that he introduced, I have given up another chapter to them—space which they not only demand but deserve, seeing that among those who worked under Colman's management were Charles Mathews, Liston, Elliston, and Young, to mention but the "leading lights."

"A chip of the old block" the elder Colman called his son in a prologue to the youth's first dramatic essay, and the expression fitted him like a glove. For "a chip of the old block" he most certainly was in more ways than one. Like his father his original destiny was anything but the stage, and like his father

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early success as a dramatist made the theatre and all that appertained to it his vocation. He followed his father's early footsteps to Westminster and thence to Oxford, and if he was not his counterfeit in form and features, he certainly resembled him closely in character, if one may judge by his own "Random Records" and the other literary souvenirs into which I have dipped. From his father he inherited a remarkable talent for play-writing, and a genius for theatrical management; like him, too, he could drive a good bargain; and if his readiness to fly into quarrelsome print on the slightest provocation were not hereditary, then I must look again in my dictionary and see what hereditary means. With his father, too, he shared a ready wit, a pen like a razor, a love of good living, a tendency to gout, and a brain that was capable of turning out almost anything in the shape of dramatic literature. That he could write capital autobiography is proved by the account of his own life, which is well worth reading by any one interested in the history of the end of the last century but one.

As had to be, with a father like his, George Colman began at a very tender age to mix with those theatrical and literary folk who gathered constantly round the family board. As quite a child he was often in the company of the great Samuel Foote, who always greeted him with the apparently unnecessary admonition, "Blow your nose, child!" and the famous Dr. Johnson was not unknown to him, though that learned gentleman took about as much interest in small children as in the care of his own personal appearance. The elder Colman was not a little proud of his boy, and was consequently somewhat piqued when on presenting him to Dr. Johnson with "This is my son, Dr. Johnson," the great man knitted his brows in wrath

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and shouted in a voice of thunder, "I see him, sir." But Dr. Johnson has never been accused of good manners. Little Colman was made much of by Goldsmith, and the mighty Garrick initiated him into the sacred mysteries of trap-ball. "He diverted and dazzled me," George Colman says of Roscius, "but he never made me love him." Horace Walpole was another of his earliest acquaintances, so that his entry into the world was literally surrounded by "somebodies."

The elder Colman, in his desire to keep his son from the theatre, was scarcely wise in letting him play more than once in private theatricals after he left Oxford, for he undoubtedly gave young George a taste for the footlights—a taste which he afterwards attempted to nip in the bud by despatching him to Aberdeen to complete his studies, which George did, while at the same time he wrote his first piece, "The Female Dramatist," which was produced anonymously at a benefit in 1782. It was not, however, till 1784 that George Colman took the bull by the horns and decided upon a theatrical career, in which his father, realising the irresistible force of heredity, encouraged him by writing a prologue to his son's play, "Two to One."

"To-night, as heralds tell, a virgin muse,  
An unstained youth, a new adventurer, sues ;  
Green in his one-and-twenty, scarce of age,  
Takes his first flight, half fledged, upon the stage.  
Within this little round, the parent bird  
Hath warbled oft, oft patiently been heard ;  
And as he strove to raise his eager throat,  
Your kind applause made music of his note.  
But now with beating heart and anxious eye,  
He sees his venturous youngling strive to fly ;  
Like Dædalus, a father's fears he brings,  
A father's hopes, and fain would plume his wings."

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So wrote the elder Colman, and the result of the evening was to find young George a successful dramatist with a swollen head.

But he was not yet to settle down to a playwright's life. His father had not given up all hopes of keeping him from the theatre, and off the conceited youth was despatched for a month or two to Paris, whence he was to return to be initiated into the mysteries of the law, much to his disgust. Colman *père* had yet another reason for getting rid of the boy, for the young gentleman looked with considerable favour upon a Miss Catherine Morris, one of his father's company, an affection of which the father did not approve. George Colman, however, was not to be put off by any trip to Paris, and he celebrated his entry into legal circles by marrying the fair Miss Morris at Gretna Green. The wedding was kept secret from his father for four years, and in 1784, the elder Colman giving his sanction, George Colman and Miss Morris were publicly and "properly" made man and wife.

The year following decided George Colman's future career once and for all. In the autumn his father took a holiday at Margate, where he was seized with a paralytic stroke, which to some extent affected his mind, though he insisted on continuing his old mode of life. But his condition was such that help he had to have, and gradually, without letting his father be aware of the fact, George Colman took a share in the management of the Haymarket Theatre—work which was greatly to his taste, and to which, as events proved, he was well adapted.

It was not till 1792 that the son had to take over his father's work completely. For two years he occupied this fiduciary position, and on the death of the elder Colman in 1794 he bought the theatre, lock,



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stock, and barrel, and set to work to bring it into even greater prominence than it had ever reached before.

In 1796 he showed the world that his pen was sharper than a serpent's tooth, for I doubt if there be a more cutting or a bitterer piece of writing extant than George Colman's preface to "The Iron Chest," a piece written by him, and produced at Drury Lane with Kemble in the leading part. Kemble was anything but a success, and the piece was badly received. This so enraged Colman that he rushed to his pen and delivered himself of such a torrent of abuse as I hope no dramatist may ever shower upon my offending head. "The most miserable mummer that ever disgraced the walls of a theatre would not have been a stronger drawback than Mr. Kemble," Colman wrote. "He was not only dull in himself, but the cause of dulness in others. Like the baleful upas of Java, his pestiferous influence infected all around him." Kemble met Colman in the street a few days after the publication of this terrible document. "You're a sad fellow, George," was all the actor said, shaking his head as he passed on.

But it is an old quarrel, and I will rake up no more of it. Kemble was undoubtedly bad in the part, but he did not deserve the epithets bestowed upon him, and one has reason to believe that Colman was somewhat ashamed of his handiwork. At any rate, the preface was partially suppressed in later years and the quarrel patched up. Colman's was indeed a curious character. When his old friend O'Keefe was about to publish his dramatic works he refused permission to print five of them, though it was more than fourteen years since any one of them had been produced. Yet a couple of years afterwards he wrote: "I am eager for an opportunity of doing all in my power on your

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account who have done so much on mine," and signed himself, "Ever truly yours."

In 1802 Colman, having heard a good deal of Charles Mathews's worth, wrote to him at York and offered him an engagement at the Haymarket, which Mathews accepted, stipulating for a salary of £10 a week.

To this Colman agreed, and early in the following year went to York to see his new recruit. Mathews and he soon became fast friends, and Mrs. Mathews was also given an engagement.

While at York Colman enjoyed the hospitality of Tate Wilkinson, the manager of the theatre. One evening Colman asked his host what play was to be given that night. "The School for Scandal," replied Wilkinson. "Ah, and what sort of Charles have you?" inquired Colman, ever on the look-out for new talent. Wilkinson pointed to a gentleman of sixty summers with few teeth and many wrinkles: "Mr. Cummins is the Charles," he replied. Colman gave an unnatural smile, and applied himself to his snuff-box, but not wanting to appear surprised went on to question the manager as to the ladies of the theatre. "You are to play 'Paul and Virginia,' I believe? Tell me who is to be Virginia?" Wilkinson this time directed his attention to a matron of whom "fat, fair, and forty" would be a polite description. Colman was fairly staggered. "'Fore Gad, Mathews," he whispered, "yours is a superannuated company."

In 1805 Colman sold a part of the Haymarket Theatre to Mr. Morris (his brother-in-law), Mr. Winston, and a lawyer called Tahourdin. The sale was scarcely effected before two extremely unpleasant "rows" took place in the theatre which had enjoyed peace for so many years. First of all Elliston accused Mathews of not having done his best in a new comedy called

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"The Village," whereupon Mathews retorted that everybody had done as well if not better than Elliston. An unmentionable word from Elliston, and Mathews let out with his right and knocked his brother actor out. The next row took the shape of a riot. Dowton announced for his benefit Foote's "Tailors," which was so much resented by the Snips that they wrote letters to the theatre threatening to break it up. These threats were disregarded, and Dowton duly appeared, only to be greeted with a huge pair of shears, which might well have finished his earthly as well as his theatrical career. They missed him, however, and the actor promptly offered £20 reward for the capture of the offender. Then the riot began. The noise attracted the mob outside, and the Bow Street magistrate was sent for, but his police were not enough for the crowd, and some dragoons from the Horse Guards had to be requisitioned. These soon cleared the mob, and, while they were busy outside, the police went in and took sixteen agitating tailors into custody.

With the year 1805 I come to the end of George Colman's life so far as it was connected with the Haymarket Theatre, for the very excellent reason that it would make but tedious reading ; besides, what interest the remaining years contained will be found in the next chapter. The history of the dispute among the partners, the litigation that ensued, the enforced closing of the theatre for an entire season, and the consequent difficulties that arose, I leave to the patient historian. They have no place in a random work like this, with no pretensions to detail and no desire other than to amuse.

So, without waiting for permission, I take a big leap over fifteen years and land myself in the middle of the year 1820, when Colman, who had retired from theatrical

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management two years before, was given the extraordinary appointment of Lieutenant of His Majesty's Guard of Yeomen of the Guard by George the Fourth. The only reason for this appointment that I can find is the fact that Colman was a great favourite with Royalty. But he was far from being a courtier. When the theatrical lieutenant first appeared at Court in full "war paint," the King went up to him and said: "George, your uniform is so well made that I don't see the hooks and eyes." "Sire," replied Colman, unhooking his coat, "here are my eyes, where are yours?"

Another story of George Colman's relations with Royalty not only shows his utter lack of good manners, but is an astounding example of what Royalty would tolerate in those days. Colman was invited to dine at Carlton House, and on meeting the Duke of York the latter ushered him through the apartments. "What capital lodgings," remarked Colman; "I have nothing like them in the King's Bench." After dinner Colman sipped his wine with great gusto. "Why, this *is* wine," he said to his Royal neighbour. A little later he turned again to the Duke and asked "Who that fine-looking fellow at the head of the table was." "Hush, George," said the Duke good-naturedly, "or you'll get into a scrape." "No, no," said Colman in a loud voice, "I came out to enjoy myself; I want to know who that fine, square-shouldered, magnificent-looking, agreeable fellow is at the head of the table." "Be quiet," returned the Duke, "you know it's the Prince." "Why, then," went on Colman again, raising his voice, "he must be your elder brother; I declare he don't look half your age. Well I remember the time he sung a good song. If he is the same good fellow to-day, he would not refuse an old playfellow."

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The Prince was much amused, and promptly complied with Colman's request, the manager meanwhile applauding uproariously. "What a magnificent voice," he said, when the song was over. "Such expression too! I'll be damned if I don't engage him for my theatre."

Strange to say the Royalties present do not seem to have been the least offended at this extraordinary behaviour.

But an excuse for Colman may be found in the probability that he was scarcely sober at the time, for he loved the cup, and suffered time after time from the after effects of his excesses, so that he would often lie in bed more than half the day. "What's the hour?" he asked one day when his servant came to his bedroom to tell him that Theodore Hook had called to see him. "Past three, sir," was the reply. "Damn him," replied Colman; "does he think I rise with the lark? Ask him to return at some reasonable hour."

One polite *mot* is recorded in connection with Colman's Royal *encontres*. "Why, Colman," the Prince Regent said to him one day, "you are older than I am." "Oh no, Sire," was the answer, "I could not take the liberty of coming into the world before your Royal Highness."

Colman was very proud of his witty sayings, and loved nothing better than to pose as a clever conversationalist, which, indeed, he could be when he chose. He said a very smart thing one night to Lord Erskine, the ex-Chancellor, with whom he was dining. His lordship was boasting of the fact that he had a thousand sheep on his land. "I perceive then," said Colman, "that your lordship has still an eye to the woolsack."



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He was very fond of making jokes in the theatre. One night an actor from Newcastle was being tried in a part, in which he had to say—

“Ah, where is my honour, now?”

He spoke the lines with a fearfully nasal accent. Colman, who was watching at the wings, groaned aloud. “Egad,” he muttered, “I wish your honour were back at Newcastle with all my heart.”

Another extremely bad actor had to say—

“I shall weep soon, and then I shall be better.”

“I’m damned if you will,” said the enraged Colman, ‘even if you cry your eyes out.’”

Colman, though he made plenty of money, was seldom in anything but a more or less embarrassed condition. He loved to pose as being an extremely smart person, and tried to live in the style of people who were worth double his income. He was not a little proud of his appearance, and though by no means a giant, loved to chaff people who happened to be shorter than himself. “Come, Mrs. L.,” said Liston one night, as they were preparing to leave Colman’s house. “Mrs. Ell, indeed,” said Colman, “Mrs. Inch, you mean.” In addition to a ready wit Colman had a satirical pen, but Mrs. Inchbald had decidedly the best of him when he entered into wordy warfare with that clever lady about a criticism from her pen of one of his plays.

But if Colman were disliked by many people owing to his quarrelsome nature, he seems to have been very popular with the members of the company. Inside the theatre he dropped any swagger that he might assume when he left it. Not only was he often a real friend to many a struggling young actor, but the

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budding playwright of promise could always count upon his help and advice. At the Haymarket he formed a kind of theatrical club, which was known as "The Property Club," owing to its being held at the back of the stage among the scenery and properties. The club began at the end of the second act of whatever piece was being produced, and went on until the curtain fell. The chair was taken by a different member every night, and several well-known *littérateurs* often occupied it. Ladies were admitted, and very jolly evenings were spent, but the club was broken up by a lady member of the company of unsavoury reputation who was excluded from its meetings, and took her revenge by writing reports of the club's doings for a newspaper.

There were two things that Colman couldn't stand—a man who wouldn't laugh uproariously at his jokes, and a successful rival in the play-writing line, even when the rival's piece was produced at his own theatre.

"Damn the fellow," he said, when Boaden's "Italian Monk" made a success at the Haymarket, "we shall now be pestered with his plays year after year." Of Sheridan's wit he was fearfully jealous—as well he might have been.

The worst side of Colman's character came out after he was appointed "Examiner of all Plays, Tragedies, Comedies, Operas, Farces, and Interludes, or any other entertainment of the stage of what denomination soever," though at first he seems to have been a more or less genial censor. Not long after he secured the post, an American actor called Hackett had alterations made in Colman's own comedy, "Who wants a Guinea?" substituting the character of Solomon Swop for the original Solomon Gundy. The play as a matter of course had to go to the

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Examiner. Colman's letter to Hackett's manager is worth producing.

"SIR,—In respect to the alterations made by Mr. Hackett (a most appropriate name on the present occasion), were the established play of any dramatist, except myself, so mutilated, I should express to the Lord Chamberlain the grossness and unfairness of the manager who encouraged such a proceeding; but as the character of Solomon Gundy was originally a part of my own writing, I shall request his Grace to license 'the rubbish,' as you call those which you have sent me.—Your obedient servant, &c.

GEORGE COLMAN."

But this is the only instance I can find of Colman's good-nature as Examiner of Plays. An old friend of his wrote: "His first acts were acts of petty tyranny, and his next those of grasping cupidity," and so they must have been. Though he had been, if anything, inclined to sail as near the wind as possible himself, he became worse than hypercritical when plays were submitted to him for examination. He refused to allow the names of either heaven or hell; he turned up his eyes in horror at the word "damn," an expletive he was very fond of using; he refused to allow "O Providence," because he declared the Providence of God was intended; and he even deleted "demme." He looked not only after the legitimate fees, but he strained the powers of his office to the utmost limit, and demanded a fee of two guineas apiece on every new song, glee, or even overture sung or played at a benefit performance. One actor was too clever for him, for in order to avoid this hideous exaction he strung together a whole list of songs, recitations, imitations, &c., and sent them to Colman as one piece. They were duly licensed, and the actor saved at least a ten-pound note. Colman even attacked his old friend

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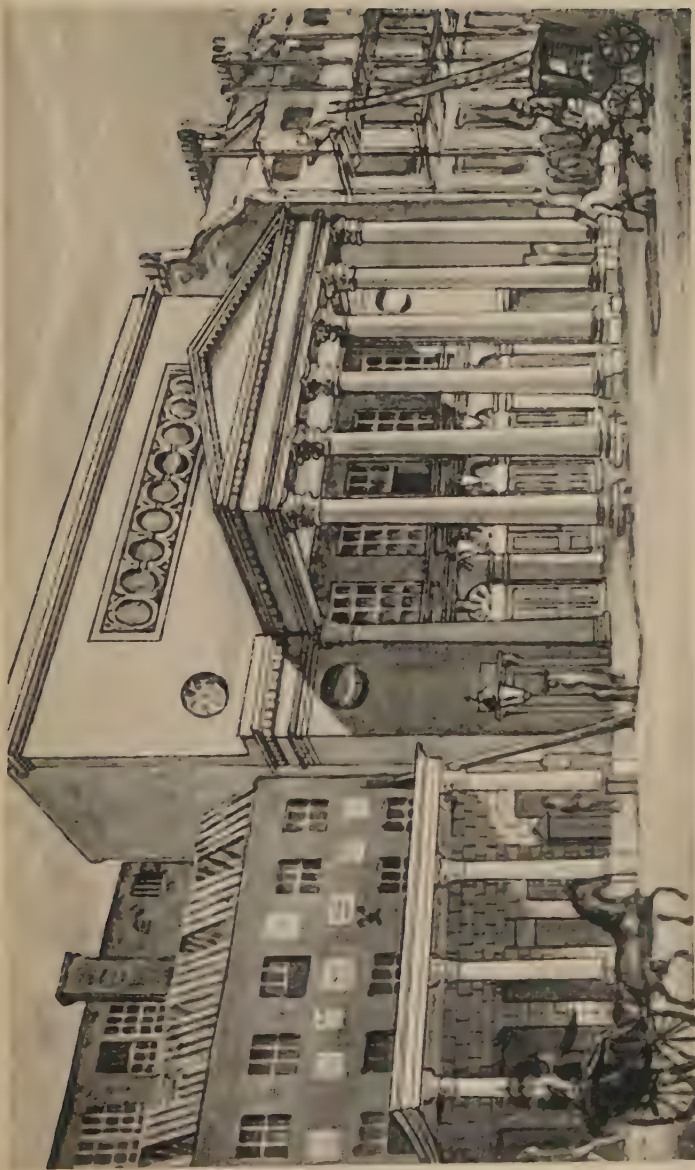
Mathews's entertainment, though most of it was from memory. But Colman failed to get his fee, nor was he successful in an endeavour to squeeze a couple of guineas from every French play performed in London.

George Colman died on the 17th of October 1736. The doctor who attended him said it had never fallen to his lot to witness, in the hour of death, "so much serenity of mind, such perfect philosophy, or resignation more complete." He lies buried under the vaults of Kensington Church.

## CHAPTER VI

HAVING at the outset of these records and reminiscences definitely cast aside the historian's cloak, I shall take the privilege of the *raconteur* and begin this chapter with what should properly come at its end—the rebuilding in 1820 of the Haymarket Theatre, a reconstruction that to all intents and purposes turned it into the handsome structure, externally, over which I have the honour to preside together with my partner to-day. Properly speaking, I suppose this book should have begun just a century later than the year with which I opened, for, as a matter of fact, it was not until 1820 that the Theatre Royal Haymarket, as the British public knows it to-day, became an existing thing. Our present theatre contains neither stone, wood, nor plaster that went to make up the construction of the Little Theatre ; it occupied a different site, though different but a yard or two, I admit ; and is, in a word, an entirely separate thing. Yet, though the Little Theatre and the Theatre Royal Haymarket have no brick and mortar relationship, it is impossible to dissociate them one from another. When the former ceased to be, the latter came quickly into being, and the management merely transferred their power from the dead to the quick. In a word, the essential difference between the Little Theatre and the Theatre Royal Haymarket is to be found in a few feet of valuable London earth, now covered by a restaurant,





Original drawing by J. Findlay, dated 1821, of the present Haymarket Theatre. The old theatre (known as "the little theatre in the Haymarket") which was built in 1733 and demolished soon after the completion of the new one in 1821 is shown on the left-hand side of the drawing.



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whose excellent kitchen and cellars often contribute to the maintenance of those who work the Haymarket wires.

Not that I would have those who do us the honour of patronising our theatre every night think for one moment that the house in which they sit is precisely the same as that which Mr. Nash designed in 1820. It is not. Externally it differs but slightly—so slightly that the prints of 1820 might be photographs of 1903—but internally, thanks to my friend Sir Squire Bancroft, to whom our stage owes not a little, it is another theatre altogether. The Theatre Royal Haymarket of 1820 had a pit which would throw the pittites of 1903 into an ecstasy, for it extended to the very footlights themselves—not footlights of electrical brilliance, but flickering and probably malodorous oil-lamps that cast a sickly glare upon the genii who confronted them. As a matter of fact, the Haymarket Theatre of 1820 was the only London playhouse that could not boast that luminous novelty of which all the world was talking—the much despised and, for theatrical illumination, surpassed gas of our present emergencies. Besides its pit, the theatre of 1820 differed from ours of to-day in that its sides were straight and its centre was but very slightly curved. But lest my architectural friends accuse me of error, I quote a contemporary historian at some length at the risk of being denounced a dullard :—

“ In point of architectural beauty,” wrote this genial gentleman, to whose counterpart I would willingly assign the puff preliminary, “ the Haymarket Theatre is the most elegant in London. The middle doors lead to the boxes, the outer on the right to the box-office, and that on the left to the pit. The gallery entrances are on each side without the portico. The ground-

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rent of this theatre is about five guineas a foot in front, and three guineas for the back part of the premises. The auditory is remarkable for having the sides straight, and the centre very slightly curved ; different in this respect from any other theatre in London. The fronts of the side-boxes, however, project semicircularly : all are decorated with gold chequered work on a pink ground, and the insides are a crimson colour. There are two circles of boxes, besides half-tiers parallel with the lower gallery. In the front circle are five private boxes, and in the second tier eight. The house holds upwards of £300. It is, perhaps, one of the most elegant interiors in London, but for convenience of seeing and hearing, the worst contrived, and so small are the hall and lobby of the boxes, that whilst sitting in the dress-circle, the audience are not infrequently annoyed by the sounds of carriages rattling in the street.

“The prices of admission are : Boxes 5s., pit 3s., gallery 2s., upper gallery 1s. Half-price is not taken. The doors open at six, and the performances commence at seven o'clock.”

Any one interested in a comparison between the theatre of 1820 and that of to-day could not have a better picture. A remarkable fact in connection with this difference is that while the prices charged were generally lower than those asked to-day, the theatre held more money than it does now.

In addition to being “for convenience of seeing and hearing the worst contrived,” the Haymarket of 1820 apparently deserved the additional blame of being possessed of an exceedingly decrepit lot of scenery. “The Haymarket is behind every other London theatre,” wrote my genial historian ; “this has long been a besetting sin of the establishment, and, as the performances require but little, is the more repreh-

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sible. A few interiors, two or three streets, and about the same number of country views, would last as stock scenery for several seasons ; but they should not be of barn-like execution."

And now another twenty years' leap, back to the beginning of the century, to a book that I discovered while rummaging among old Haymarket records—old ledgers, old prompt books, old scores, whose paper time had ground to powder. So odd does this book seem to our theatrical eyes that I not only reproduce a page of it, but quote—now that I am in quoting mood—some extracts from its time-faded pages. It is a quaint old book this, bound in leather whose strength would do honour to a ploughman's boot, and clasped tight with heavy brass—a log-book, its best description, in which every detail and every discrepancy seems to have been recorded. The years that it covers are but two or three at the beginning of last century, but it was not until after the theatre was laid low and rebuilt that the keeping of such volumes went out of theatrical fashion. There is something tragi-comical about the old records that I reproduce ; something almost uncanny in the reading of names like those of Mathews, Liston, Elliston, Suett, Palmer, and Young, as one turns over the pages.

The book contains a list of the " Annual Establishment " (company), which included such strangers to our present stage as a couple of constables, a working " taylor," two lamp-men, a candle woman, a property woman (we employ men now), a permanent composer, and a barber who was always on the premises ; an " Index to cast of pieces and each night's performance ; " " Nights each performer has played " (kept with scrupulous exactitude), and " Diary of the Business," with the frankest of frank comments by the gentleman,



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whoever he may have been, to whom the keeping of the book was intrusted.

The actors and actresses at the beginning of the last century seem, so far as modern eyes can see, casual to quite an extraordinary degree. Over and over again they seem to have ignored performances in which they were supposed to have taken part, without, apparently, offering the slightest excuse to their manager. As to how that gentleman was revenged on those delinquents I have been at a loss to discover. Presumably they were fined, or, as several of them seem to have been merely engaged by the night, it is to be supposed that they forfeited a day's salary of their own free will and accord. At any rate play truant they very often did, as my old "log-book" shows time and time again. Here, on one of its very first pages, I read under the date of the 24th of July 1797 that the performance of "My Grandmother" was "dismissed, as nobody but Mr. C. Kemble, Mrs. Edward, and Miss Andrews attended." Where the rest of the company got to, or why they absented themselves it would sadly tax the resources of the British Museum to discover. When I come to June 1798 I find the candid historian of the Haymarket Theatre informing me that on the 23rd of this month "The New Play of 'The Inquisitor' went but indifferently;" while on the 7th of July of the same year it is written that "the new farce ('Throw Physick to the Dogs') was completely damn'd this evening, the audience not permitting it to be finished." After which confession of failure it is satisfactory to read that "The new play of 'Cambro Britons'" was well received not many days later.

Coming to August, 1798, it is touching to read that on the 18th there was "No performance at this theatre this evening. N.B.—The comedy of the 'Heir at Law,'

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and the musical entertainment of 'The Children in the Wood' were performed at the Opera House, being for the benefit of the orphan family of the late Mr. Palmer, who died on the stage at Liverpool on Thursday, August 2, while performing the part of The Stranger in the fourth act of the play of that name."

September, 1798, produced an amusing extract which, I confess, puzzles me not a little. It reads: "*N.B.*—It being so very late this evening before the Farce could be begun, the first scene was omitted." Being ignorant of the farce I may perhaps be excused for wondering how it could possibly be begun at the second act. The audience must, I presume, have been extraordinarily familiar with it.

Sometimes, apparently, the actors not only played truant but "turned nasty" after their arrival at the theatre. Otherwise how can I account for the following extract: "Mr. Johnstone refusing to perform this evening, the audience were kept waiting full three quarters of an hour before Mr. Trueman could get from Drury Lane Theatre to play the part of Greville. Mrs. Edwards' first scene in 'Fortune's Frolic' was oblig'd to be omitted in consequence of her not coming in time to the theatre." Thank Heaven, *my* Haymarket colleagues never play me these tricks!

Another extract that interests me is dated the 20th of June 1800. It says: "Mr. Emery having made his first appearance in Ezekiel Homespun that character is considered his during the season." The word "creation," apparently, had not the same import it possesses to-day!

More than once the "band," as it was known in those days, followed the actors' bad example of not "turning up," but their absence appears to have made no difference to the success of the evening's entertain-

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ment. At any rate the keeper of the Haymarket log-book seems to have been but little affected by the lack of musical support. Nor does he appear to have been greatly surprised when "Mr. Ledger came too late for his scene in 'Inkle and Yarico,' in consequence of his mistaking the order in which the pieces for the evening were acted."

Only now and then, indeed, does the historian betray emotion. On the 14th of August 1802 I read that "The new ballet of 'Fairies Revels' was received with the most unbounded applause," while on the 7th of September of the same year my chronicler is betrayed into some wrath by the fact that "Mrs. Mountain absented herself from her business without assigning any cause for such absence, either by letter or message." But generally the log betrays a calm, cold, unemotional nature, in which one may read apathy or sarcasm as one wills. "Miss Stebbins did not come to the theatre this evening to go on as one of the passengers in 'Ways and Means.'" What a very world of subtle sarcasm may be hidden in that literally icy remark; and what hard stern fact is shown by the extract: "The new play of the 'Maid of Bristol,' Mr. Boaden the author, was received with tolerable applause."

Though only a century old, those days of the Haymarket ring a quaint note in our time. It seems strange to picture a theatre lit with candles and oil lamps, the danger of which must have been enormous, only permitted to keep open during the summer months of the year, and often compelled to wait until what are, I suppose, now my rivals, chose to close their doors, and consequently send them some actors. By 1820 the days of rioting were over, it is true, the stage had been cleared of interlopers, and the play was more

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"the thing" than some of the members of the audience who witnessed it.

But one must not run away with the idea that the rebuilt brand-new Haymarket Theatre of 1820 presented one and the same picture night after night, as it does in this year of grace. Apart from the costumes of actors and audience, and the structural differences, the house presented quite another aspect in many smaller ways. For one thing, the band played in full view of the audience, the conductor on important nights leading on the pianoforte in the centre of his troupe. For another, the attendants who ushered the audience to their seats were not the uniformed gentlemen whose noiseless step and silent beckoning go so well with the soft-seated stalls and the shaded lights of 1903, but starch, matronly females who paid for the privilege they enjoyed, and did quite a flourishing trade in "books of the play," and "songs of the evening." These very respectable dames were certainly an improvement on the "orange-girls" of the century before, but I venture to think that we have made still further progression. Apart from the ladies who looked after the front part of the auditorium, the Haymarket of 1820 also boasted "box-women," who in addition to ushering you into your box tempted you to buy fruit which they carried in baskets on their arms. "Choice fruit and a bill of the play" were offered in shrill tones, while from the gallery came the continual cry, whenever opportunity offered, of "Bottled porter and cider, spruce and ginger beer." The better part of the audience, of course, refreshed, as they refresh now, in the foyers or "saloons", as they called them in those days, but the "gods" enjoyed the particular privilege of partaking of porter in the seats where they sat.

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Pictures of the horrified faces of metropolitan legislative readers rise before me as I write !

I need hardly say that a great feature of all the theatres in 1820 was the green-room. To-day it has practically ceased to exist, but in those times it was the great resort of the wits and other celebrities, and admission to it was eagerly sought. Just as we get all our after-dinner stories from the Stock Exchange to-day, so in 1820 did they emanate from the green-rooms of the principal theatres. Even Royalty sought the society of the players between the acts, and laughed at the wit of the "rogues and vagabonds"—often more heartily than they did when watching them from their boxes.

Scenic and other effects were scarcely what we should describe as realistic to-day. In a little volume of the period which devotes a chapter to properties, I find, after two recipes for red and green fire, that "these fires are burnt at the sides and back of the stage behind standards, &c., to produce strong tints. The effects are further heightened by silk shades of the respective colour before the side and footlights of the stage. The beautiful effect of moonlight is thus produced." But if this description appear primitive, it must not be forgotten that by 1820 the theatre had attained to such realism as the introduction of a real live elephant, and "real horses" were a certain draw on the playbills, while if to the attraction of these bipeds were added those of camels, dogs, and water, the people came in their thousands.

Apropos of large audiences how thankful should we be for the altogether admirable queue system. Though it was only the other day that people still squashed and squeezed one another at the risk of life and limb to get good places in the unreserved parts of the house, there







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THE INTERIOR OF THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

PLATE IV

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are, I believe, but few parallels to the ghastly accident that occurred at the Haymarket Theatre in the early days of the younger Colman's management. The King and Queen had commanded three pieces, "My Grandmother," "No Song, no Supper," and "The Prize," and so eager to be present were the loyal playgoers of those days that they crowded outside the pit door in extraordinary numbers. The result was a shocking catastrophe. In the rush down the stairs—there were stairs *down* to the pit in those days—no less than fifteen lives were lost, and the contemporary accounts of the ghastly sight make unpleasant reading. The King and Queen were kept ignorant of the terrible accident until the performance was over. "While they had been laughing to the utmost," says Dr. Doran, "many a tear had been flowing for the dead, many a groan uttered by the wounded who had struggled so frightfully to share in the joyousness of that evening, and the King's own two heralds, York and Somerset, were lying crushed to death among the slain."

There was, it is scarcely necessary for me to say, far more solemnity and importance attached to Royal visits in those days than in these commonplace times. When State visits were paid great were the preparations made, and most distracting was the presence of the Royalties who sat under canopies of velvet and gold. Few of the audience paid much attention to the play on "royal nights."

How different from the quiet, unobtrusive visits of our own King and Queen, and our Prince and Princess of Wales nowadays. Their one endeavour is to give as little trouble as possible to those whom they honour with their presence, and so far from distracting the audience from the stage they set the example of ab-

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solutely perfect playgoing. How much the stage owes to our present Royal family is perhaps only properly appreciated by those whose business is on the boards. If any one wants to know what "a good audience" means, he has only to watch the Royal box.

## CHAPTER VII

IN dealing with that great company that brought fame and fortune to George Colman the younger and his partners, I am, I confess, much tempted to write at length of one whose name ranks among the highest in all the annals of all the theatres. But Edmund Kean's connection with the Haymarket was comparatively so slight that I have no right to take advantage of it. So far as our theatre was concerned he was, on his first appearance there, but an "extra gentleman"—passed over, ignored, unappreciated—a prematurely disappointed man. No one in those days took notice of the sad-faced fellow who hung about the Haymarket wings and did his work silently and unobtrusively, with scarce a word to his fellows. Some may have looked upon his careworn face, on which Fate had already stamped hard lines, which want had thinned, and drink had even coarsened. But there was no one to hold him out the hand of sympathy, to give the cheering word of encouragement, that would have meant so much in those dark days. All he had to live for was hope and the dramatic fire that burned so fiercely that it threatened to consume. For bread he donned the footman's breeches or the ploughman's smock, but he felt, though life had tried its utmost to dissuade him, that the future had fame in store. To his poor, tired, life-weary wife and to his sickly child he would go back and talk of the days to come when he should reign, where he was then doing



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homage. And the wife would smile the sad smile of abandoned hope, and the weakly child would clap his little thin hands in eager anticipation of the good things to come. And the little, shabby, struggling "extra gentleman" would lie down to rest and dream that he was lord of Old Drury and the world was his servant.

That was the first Edmund Kean of the Haymarket Theatre. The second was the Edmund Kean whose dreams had come true, the man who had reached the highest rung of the ladder, and in the climb had lost health, strength, and looks—had become a dissipated, brandy-sodden shadow. Somehow I feel I must leave the story of Edmund Kean with his first engagement as an "extra gentleman" at the Haymarket Theatre. Mighty actor as he was—a very god among players—I would rather think of him as the "extra gentleman" with his half-starved home, than as the leader of the stage with his four-horsed coach, his mistress, and his bloated, drink-ruined face. For in the one picture we have the loving wife and child, and in the other a woman to whom all the silks in Spitalfields could not bring back the affection denied to her which was her right, and a son who cursed his father's name as often as in the old days he had mingled it with his prayers, though all that father's promises had been fulfilled.

No one has better proved the truism that Fame does not always have happiness in her train than Edmund Kean. He stood upon the pinnacle, but he was happier at the base.

Mathews the elder, as we speak of him to-day, was probably the younger Colman's brightest star in a firmament that suffered from no lack of constellations. It will, I suppose, for ever remain a matter of dispute whether he or Samuel Foote was the greatest mimic

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the world has ever seen, and far be it from me to act as referee for one moment. At any rate the elder Mathews's mimicry must have been "bad to beat." "There was but one Mathews in the world," wrote Horace Smith, "there can never be another. Mimics, buffoons, jesters, wags, and even admirable comedians we shall never want; but what are the best of them compared to him?" He was a tall, thin fellow, so thin that Tate Wilkinson said that "he had never seen anybody so thin to be alive;" and he was possessed of a face so naturally comical that, though he had the voice and the art to play tragedy, he was so irresistibly comical of feature that as a serious actor the public would have little of him. The best description of his appearance is that given by himself of himself as a child:—

"My nurse informed me that I was a long, thin skewer of a child; of a restless, fidgety temperament, and by no means regular features—quite the contrary. The agreeable twist of my would-be features was occasioned by a species of hysteric fit to which I was subject in infancy, one of which distorted my mouth and eyebrows to such a degree as to render me almost hideous for a time; though my partial nurse declared 'my eyes made up for all, they were so bright and lively.' Be this as it may, certain it is that after the recovery from the attack, folks laughed the moment they saw me, and said 'Bless the little dear! It's not a beauty, to be sure; but what a funny face it has.' The 'off-side' of my mouth, as a coachman would say, took such an affection for my ear that it seemed to make a perpetual struggle to form a closer communication with it, and one eyebrow became fixed as a rusty weathercock, while the other propped up an inch apparently beyond its proper

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position. The effects remain to this day — though moderated.”

No wonder that when there was added to this comic face a talent that has never been excelled, the elder Mathews should have taken the town by storm, and have become a standing dish of which the patrons of the Haymarket could never have too much. In addition to his great gifts as an actor, he had an extraordinary talent for “making up,” so much so that he frequently deceived the audience for several minutes, only to be greeted with rapturous applause upon the discovery of his identity. He was a single-minded fellow, whose only fault was a certain shortness of temper that was probably to be accounted for by a naturally delicate constitution. If he put on any “side” at all, it was in respect of his knowledge regarding matters of art, and more than once he was the victim of unscrupulous dealers who relieved him of a large part of his salary in exchange for spurious furniture, whose origin, I fear, left little doubt. But unhappy was the man who tried to put the otherwise genial Mathews straight in such matters. Chaff him you could, but not correct his artistic mistakes! Blind is the only description of the rage that followed such eye-opening. Otherwise he was *bonhomie* itself, a thorough good fellow who was always welcome at festive gatherings. He was for ever possessed with the idea that humour was demanded of him, off as well as on the stage, but while the theatre drew it out in abundance he was seldom funny as an after-dinner speaker, his wit always giving the impression of being strained. But he was never backward in “showing off” in company, and was probably the most obliging guest in the way of entertainment imaginable. For he was never happy when ignored,

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and applause was sweet music in his ears in the theatre or out of it. As a practical joker Mathews had but one contemporary equal in the shape of Theodore Hook, who often carried his jokes a trifle too far. This Mathews seldom did. A good story is told of how one night having to travel by coach from Exeter to Plymouth, he was obliged to ride outside in the pouring rain without coat or umbrella. He put up with the discomfort for some time, but at last determined to resort to strategy in order to get a shelter from the wet, and began to whine and fret so like a child in distress that one of the inside passengers cried out: "Dear me, there is a poor child on the roof in the rain, let's take it in." This sympathetic remark was followed by a lady's head and shoulders, who called out to Mathews, half-hidden by the darkness of the night:

"Give me the poor child, my good woman."

"No, no," said Mathews, mimicking a woman's voice, "my leetle Adolphe sal not leave his maman."

"Good gracious," said the sympathetic lady, "it's a barbarous Frenchwoman. She'll kill the poor little thing. Coachman, stop, stop."

But the rain and the cold had not softened the driver's temper and he surlily refused, whereupon Mathews pretended to get into a passion with the infant, and after a series of supposed yells on the part of the baby and harsh admonitions from the mother, the latter wound up by screaming in half-broken English:

"Dere den, got-damn, lie in de puddle."

"Stop, coachman; murder, murder!" yelled the inside passengers. "She's killed the child; stop, stop!"

"In a minute or two, ma'am, I mustn't lose time

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between the stages," grunted the driver, and in a few moments the coach was pulled up at an inn.

No sooner had the horses come to a standstill than Mathews jumped down and ran to the fire to dry himself. In the meanwhile a search party was organised to look for the missing infant, while the rest of the passengers searched the inn for the murderous mother. So eager was one of the party in the search that he related afterwards how not only had he failed to find the child, but that another gentleman took his place in the coach, which left too soon for him to have time to overtake it!

The younger Colman had the highest respect and affection for Mathews, and declared that he was the most just and honourable man he had ever had business dealings with. All agreements between the two were made verbally, and it stands to the credit of both of them that they were never disputed. That Mathews was the mainstay of the Haymarket is proved by George Colman's own letters. In one he literally implored the great comedian to appear at the theatre in a Harlequinade despite the pain he was suffering, from being thrown out of a gig with Terry—an accident which not only dislocated his hip, but caused him suffering for the remainder of his life. So loyal was Mathews to his "chief" that, unfit as he was, he nevertheless made his bow as Harlequin, hobbling on to the stage with the aid of a stick. An apology, delivered by his fellow-sufferer Terry, was made for him. It did not lack wit:

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Before the curtain rises I am requested to say a few words to you on behalf of an invalid. Mr. Mathews still continues to suffer much, very much, from his late severe accident; but he trusts that his anxiety in coming forward thus early



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to perform his duty to you, and to fulfil his engagement here, will atone for his deficiencies in bodily activity requisite to the character he is about to sustain. A former very celebrated proprietor of this theatre once enjoyed the fullest favours as 'a devil on two sticks,' and it is hoped, nay, it cannot be doubted, that you will now extend your utmost indulgence to a harlequin upon one ! ”

One of Mathews's pet disbeliefs was that a fish could be or ever was caught with rod and line. A net he could understand, but he refused to admit that "fishes are such cursed fools as not to know that catgut and wire isn't good for them." In society he could be most entertaining, but he was extraordinarily impressed by surroundings, and a dismal room would depress him as much as a bright and pretty one would cheer his spirits. It is doubtful whether he was a happy man—few great comedians are, I believe—but his melancholy was seldom obtruded on his friends. Only when alone would he give way to depression that he often had no little difficulty in shaking off. As an actor he was probably one of the most conscientious who have ever lived, and he had an untiring capacity for study. In fact, as regards his value to the management of the younger Colman, his reliability came only second to his remarkable genius.

I have said that his face denied him tragic parts, but the public often shed tears over him when the piece allowed him sentiment, for he had tears in his voice which overcame the humour of his irresistible face.

Another mighty actor under the younger Colman's management—John Liston—was also possessed of the successful comedian's pet ambition, to shine as a

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tragedian. But though he played Romeo for his benefit, it would have been for no one else's had he appeared often in the part. Yet he began his stage career as a hero of tragedy, though fame only came to him when he first trod the boards of the Haymarket. The great feature of his acting was his gravity; he would speak the most humorous lines with a face a yard long, and even when he played tricks with his audience or his fellow-actors, he never forgot to be serious. But he was "fond of his little joke," and when Mathews on being asked by him to play for his benefit excused himself on the ground that he had to act elsewhere and could not "split himself in halves," Liston replied, "I don't know that, for I've often seen you play in two pieces."

Hook put him up to a practical joke one night, into which Liston was easily able to enter on account of the excellent terms on which he always was with his audience. A young married couple from the country had begged a couple of seats of Hook, who procured them two prominent chairs in the dress-circle. So soon as Liston appeared a roar of laughter went up from the audience. Liston walked to the footlights and gazed upon the house with a reproachful air. "I fail to understand this conduct, ladies and gentlemen," he said in his most solemn tones. "I fail to see what you can find ridiculous in me. Why, there's John and his cousin Martha C——," pointing at the young couple, "laughing at me too. What business have they to make fun of me? I'll tell his father and see what he says about it." The audience in a body naturally stared at the unfortunate young couple, who jumped up from their seats and left the house amid roars of laughter, thinking themselves in a madhouse.

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While Liston was playing at Plymouth a "middie" swaggered into the house flourishing his dirk. "Why don't you attend to the announcement at the bottom of the bills?" said Liston to the doorkeeper. "Can't you see—Children in arms not admitted?"

Liston began life as a school teacher, but a taste for amateur theatricals soon led to the abandonment of the lesson-books for the professional footlights. It was not until after he had left the Haymarket that he reached the pinnacle of his fame. At one time, when under Madame Vestris, his salary was one of the highest of any contemporary actor, for he received no less than £150 per week for six consecutive seasons. He was one of the very few actors who have died rich men.

The younger Colman pays Liston a fine tribute in his "Random Records":

"Liston is exquisite in his line," he says, "and Edwin was equally so. I know not how I can better express my opinion of both than by stating that I admire Liston now as I admired Edwin formerly, and that when Edwin was and Liston is in his element, I have no conception of a greater comic treat than the performance of either." Liston's first performance at the Haymarket was as Sheepface in "The Village Lawyer."

All the contemporary critics, however, were not so kind to him, for his familiarity with the audience appears to have annoyed them intensely. They described his "gesticular drolleries" as "the result of intoxication by success," and asserted that he violated the rule that Shakespeare declared in "Hamlet":

"And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them."

That these critics were not far wrong is fairly well

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proved by the story I have just told, but here is further evidence in the form of another and, I believe, equally authentic anecdote. Liston was playing Lord Grizzle in the burlesque tragedy of "Tom Thumb," in which he had to give a dance that pleased his audience enormously. One night they were especially delighted, and encored him rapturously. He gave the first and second encores, but when a third was shouted for, nothing would induce him to go on again. But the audience would have no denial, and yelled and shouted so loud that it was impossible for the performance to proceed. At last the uproar became so great that Liston had to come forward.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," he said curtly, "I regret that I am too fatigued to oblige now."

The reception of this refusal was rather mixed, and a little later on in the evening a wag in the pit caused a general roar of laughter by shouting out to the actor who was fencing with Liston in the duel scene, "Please, take care. Don't do too much, or you'll fatigue him."

The next day some one posted up a bulletin in the green-room to the effect that "Lord Grizzle's physician was happy to declare his lordship greatly recovered from his fatigue." Liston was chaffed about it for a long time afterwards, but as a genial critic of the day pointed out, "While he confined his humour within the bounds prescribed by the author, he might fatigue himself, but never his audience."

Liston like Mathews was lucky in his face. "It is not displeasing," wrote one who had often seen him, "but presents, nevertheless, a most eccentric example of the boldness with which Nature can violate all her own established rules of beauty and proportions. No damsel of romance ever made a greater progress

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in glory, and in fortune, by her lovely countenance than Mr. Liston has by his grotesque physiognomy."

He was also possessed of a natural looseness of the hip, which seems to have served him in excellent stead in many parts. Some people even went so far as to say that no one could have ever equalled Liston in certain characters, because they were without this peculiar suppleness.

My wife's grandfather, John Emery, was yet another of the younger Colman's shining lights. He was a born player in more senses than one, for his father and mother were both actors of some celebrity in the provinces. Their original idea was to make a musician of their boy, but in spite of several performances in the orchestra of a Brighton theatre, John Emery kicked over the music stand and leapt upon the stage, to remain there so long as health and strength lasted. A great character actor he was, and his very first part of a decrepit, mumbling old fellow proved it, but he had to go through that best of all theatrical training-schools, the provincial, or "country" theatres, as they were known then, until, after serving a time with Tate Wilkinson of York, who surely was the master of half the great actors of the period, London claimed him, and he came to town to stay. As a rustic, and more especially a Yorkshire rustic, he has probably never been equalled. People found it hard to believe that the characters of which he made so much required any acting on his part at all. Dress, manners, gait, and accent (acquired in his early youth, which had been spent in the Ridings) were alike perfect. His audiences literally loved him, and he was a favourite from the start.

There are two reasons why any notice of John Emery to be interesting and amusing must necessarily



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be comparatively brief—the one that he died of natural decay at the early age of forty-five; the other that his life was, at any rate in comparison with that of many of his contemporaries, blameless.

“The players most in estimation for the regularity of their private life afford little matter for biography, and show, where proof is wanting, that the profession’s not in fault for those eccentricities of conduct which, by the austere and illiberal, are considered necessarily inseparable from a player’s life,” writes John Galt in his *Memoir of John Emery*. “In all his domestic relations Mr. Emery has been uniformly spoken of with respect, and in the several duties which appertained to his sphere he equalled not merely his friends, but was exemplary in his class, affording another instance that however brilliant in adventure and character the actor may appear on the stage, owing to the variety of parts he performs, there is no obligation imposed upon him to deviate from the proprieties which belong to his station in society.”

Stilted, but how admirably true!

In addition to his talents as an actor John Emery was no mean musician, and could use his voice with more than average amateur effect. Moreover, he could write a capital song, and tell a story with excellent effect. His death came about through the rupture of a blood-vessel, and he left behind him a widow and seven children.

Two of these children are not unconnected with a good story of John Emery, for whose accuracy I can vouch. One evening “Pizarro,” in which he played the tender-hearted sentinel, was advertised for performance. A considerable audience awaited the rising of the curtain, which was so long delayed that signs and noises indicative of impatience became manifest,

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and some one was sent before the curtain to apologise and to explain that in consequence of the absence of one of the chief actors a few minutes' more indulgence must be begged. Hardly had this person retired behind the curtain when John Kemble, who was dressed for Rolla, took his place and said :

"Ladies and Gentlemen, at the request of the principal performers in the play, I am to inform you that the person alluded to is Mr. Emery."

No sooner, however, had John Kemble made his bow and retired, than up turned Emery in a great-coat with dirty boots and his face streaming with perspiration. He was in such a state of agitation that he could scarcely articulate.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," he at last managed to say, "this is the first time I have ever had to appear before you as an apologist. But, ladies, for you I must particularly address, my wife was but an hour since brought to bed, and I ran for the doctor."

Thunders of applause and yells of "Bravo, Emery!" greeted this speech, and the actor retired with his hand to his heart to "make up."

During the piece Emery "got back" on John Kemble. Kemble as Rolla had to say to Emery the sentinel, "Have you a wife?"

"I have," was the answer.

"Children?"

"I had two this morning—I have three now."

So delighted was the audience with John Emery's impromptu that Kemble had to retire in confusion.

This was undoubtedly the only occasion on which my wife's grandfather ever gave his manager trouble, for he was peculiarly conscientious, and prided himself on his punctuality, which was almost proverbial.

Perhaps his greatest part was that of Tyke in the

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"School of Reform." Galt says that "It was, if excellence can be spoken of as a fault, too violent. Never was the frenzy of guilt and remorse so truly exhibited. It was a very whirlwind and hurricane of the soul." It is this single character that entitles Emery to the epithet of a "great performer."

The most magnificent, possibly the best of all the Haymarket company at the beginning of the last century, was Robert William Elliston, who was originally designed for the Church, a profession for which, some of his contemporaries were kind enough to say, he was as well fitted as for that of an actor. But though his guardian wished it, the cassock was not for Elliston. "The drama captivated his youthful fancy, and fondness for pleasure inclined him to the gayer pursuits in life." The dramatic spark was kindled by a favourable reception of his delivery of an oration, and the fire soon burned so briskly that he ran away from St. Paul's school and took coach to Bath.

Here the necessity of some means of subsistence drove him into a lottery-office, where he worked as a clerk till an engagement turned up at the theatre. From Bath he went to Tate Wilkinson, to whom the Haymarket owes so much, but he met with little success at York, and at last grew weary of the struggle.

Sick at heart he craved forgiveness of his guardian, who received him back. His next move was to Bath again, to try his theatrical luck once more, and this time he succeeded. He also managed to fall in love with a very smart young lady, "whose public character and private worth are allowed to keep pace with the accomplishments of her person and her mind," as a chronicler of the day had it. This excellent young lady returned Elliston's affection, but, as he was scarcely a *parti*, stumbling-blocks were placed in the

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way of their marriage. But married they were determined to be, openly or clandestinely. The young lady's friends compelled them to the latter course, and upon his innamorata going up to London on a visit, young Elliston begged leave of his manager to follow her. Just as he was about to go, however, the young lady returned unexpectedly, and Elliston took the bull by the horns and married her straight away, leaving for London and the Haymarket Theatre immediately after the ceremony.

Under Colman he became the leading man, and acting-manager into the bargain, and as such he remained till Winston secured a share in the theatre.

That Elliston was a truly great comedian there seems no reason to doubt—not so great perhaps as he himself imagined, for he was a lofty person, with no small idea of his own powers. He was a good-looking man, nearly six feet high, and a thorough stage gentleman, who made love more eagerly than any actor before him. He always dressed his parts in precisely the same way—blue coats, white breeches, and white waistcoats. "I can conceive nothing better than Elliston in gentleman's comedy," Byron has said. His manner was truly magnificent, and the humbler people who played with him stood in no little fear of him. But though he would act on and off the stage, his was a genial nature, with no dislike of the bottle, which generally had the effect of showing him in the pleasantest light. "As the joyousest of once embodied spirits," so Lamb addressed his shade. "Magnificent were thy capriccios on this globe of earth. It irks me to think that, stripped of thy regalia, thou should'st ferry over, a poor forked shade, in crazy Stygian wherry. Methinks I have seen the old boatman paddling by the weedy wharf, with raucid voice

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bawling 'Sculls, sculls!' to which with waving hand and majestic action thou deignest no reply other than in two curt syllables, "No oars, oars!"

"I am the same person off the stage as I am on," Elliston said one day, but the confession must not be given the popular interpretation. "Wherever Elliston walked, sate, or stood still, there was the theatre. He carried about with him pit, boxes, and galleries, and set up a portable play-house at corners of streets and in the market-place," says Lamb, who tells some delightful stories of the great actor in his charming essay "Ellistoniana." One of them I must reproduce; it gives one such a perfect idea of the actor's great manner.

The scene was the green-room of the Olympic Theatre (of which Elliston became manager after leaving Drury Lane); the characters, Elliston and "one of those little tawdry things that flirt at the tail of choruses."

"How dare you, madam," spoke Elliston in a voice of thunder—"how dare you withdraw yourself, without notice, from your theatrical duties?"

"I don't know that, sir, but I will never stand to be hissed."

Then again spoke Elliston, "gathering up his features into one significant mass of wonder, pity, and expostulatory indignation,"

"They have hissed *me*."

Elliston was yet another example of a born comedian with a perpetual desire for tragedy. "Have you heard," he asked Lamb, "how they treat me?—they put me in *comedy*!" But it is only fair to say that his Hamlet was pronounced better than Kemble's. Of his Falstaff, contemporary critics literally raved, and he seems to have succeeded where so many have



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failed, of never letting the bibulous knight be anything but the gentleman that he was.

But I am chiefly concerned with the Elliston of the Haymarket. There he became so great a favourite that when the day came for his benefit the applications for seats were so many that it had to be given at the Opera House. In such numbers did the people swarm into the pit that many were swept past the check-takers in the rush, and their money had to be collected from them after they had taken their seats. When the curtain went up the stage was literally blocked with people. The audience hissed, and shouts of "off" came from all parts of the house. Elliston came forward.

"Madame Bouti, a foreigner, was permitted to fill her stage with friends," he said; "I trust this same indulgence may be allowed to a Briton."

It was!

Elliston is said to have netted £600 that night, but Kean's first benefit at Drury Lane brought him in no less than £2000!

A capital story is told of Elliston's youth. He had the manners of a saint, but he was not one, though he was known at school as the "young crocodile," from his extraordinary command of tears. He had his amours like the rest of them, and among his flames was an inn-keeper's wife at Wapping. One day while paying his court to the lady an alarm was given, and no better place being found in which to hide him, Elliston was packed into a chest. The minutes flew by, and no release coming, the stifled youth turned to lift the lid; but in vain. Then suddenly there came to him the sound of dripping water and shouts of "Fire." His agony of mind was awful. He struggled in vain to get out, and at

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last fell back exhausted, only to be released by his innamorata a few moments later, the fire having proved but trifling.

Describing the scene afterwards to a friend he remarked : " At last I had nothing for it but patience and prayer."

" Prayer," rebuked the friend, " should have been preceded by repentance."

" Sir," replied Elliston, " I did not pray directly for myself, but that those who were endeavouring to subdue the fire might be induced to take care of the furniture."

One night when dining with Lamb the latter apologised for there being only one dish.

" I too never eat but one dish at dinner," replied Elliston, " reckoning the fish as nothing."

Lamb, by the way, made a good joke one day at Elliston's expense. They were playing whist, and the essayist noticed that his partner's hands were extremely dirty. " What a hand you would have, Elliston, if dirt were trumps," he remarked.

Elliston had no wish to be ignored by posterity, and requested Moncrieff to be his biographer. " You will not fail to recollect," he said in his most magnificent tones, " that Garrick could not sing : I can. That Lewis could not act tragedy : I can. That Mossop could not play comedy : I can. That Kean never wrote a drama : I have. Do not forget these things, sir, but in mentioning my name you cannot help associating with my name all that is memorable in the age in which I flourished."

When Elliston was manager of Drury Lane he was also lessee of the theatre at Birmingham. Elliston ran down for a night to play there, and found that one of his company was imperfect. He therefore re-

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proached him in his loftiest manner, whereupon the actor instead of humbly apologising flew into a furious rage and threatened to kick his manager into the pit.

Instead of instantly dismissing him Elliston inquired the man's name.

"Mr. —, sir," said the stage manager.

"A great man, sir," replied Elliston, "a very great man. He threatened to kick me, sir, the lessee of Drury Lane! Such a man as that is wanted in London town. He mustn't waste his energies here."

And he gave the astonished actor an engagement at Drury Lane on the spot.

Elliston was a greater success as an actor than manager. Over Drury Lane, the Olympic, and the Surrey he held sway, but he died a poor man, and he acted himself out. But to the last he was majestic, his dying instructions being that his epitaph should be written in Latin.

It would seem that no other language could do justice to his memory.

Charles Kemble was yet another who gave brilliance to the Haymarket Theatre at the beginning of the last century. A brother of his great brother John, he naturally laboured under the disability that accompanies the relations of famous actors who choose the stage as a profession, inviting a comparison which, if seldom odious, never lifts him beyond the position of younger brothers. Had he been anybody but a blood relation of the great John he would in all probability have reached the very top of the ladder; as it was, he had still three rungs to climb. But he was a fine and a finished actor, who lost rather than gained by a name that had already been made famous. He had the natural advantages of an heroic face and a noble air, and his Hamlet must have been a great

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performance. Yet he had the disadvantage of a weak voice, and was in figure, if we are to believe contemporary writers, more clumsy than graceful. With Shakespeare, however, he began and with Shakespeare he ended, and he was Shakespearean to the backbone. In comedy he was unequal; in fact, throughout his career he either triumphed or failed, though his failures were always magnificent.

Kemble was the husband of the famous Miss De Camp, a Viennese by birth, who danced herself from the ballet at the Opera House to the Haymarket, where she soon showed of what good dramatic stuff she was made. Not only had this clever lady a real talent for the stage, but she was a singer of no small merit, and wrote more than one successful play. Her stage career was not a long one, for her figure grew too round and fat for young parts, and she would play no others. But ten years after her retirement she returned for one night to the stage to introduce her daughter as Juliet, herself playing Lady Capulet. Her success was the more remarkable in that she had to learn to speak English first and write it afterwards; but her engagement at the Haymarket was secured not by her talents alone, but also through the advice of the Prince of Wales, who was a great admirer of her cleverness, and recommended her to the younger Colman.

Charles Kemble began life as a Post-Office clerk, but threw up his berth a year after he secured it. From the letter-box he went straight to the stage. He was so good an actor by nature that his early life had none of the bitterness that flavoured the beginning of so many of his contemporaries careers. His talent improved with age, and he was a better lover at forty than at thirty.

One more of Colman's "stars" and I have finished

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a chapter whose inadequacy may be partly put down to lack of space. No record of the great ones who made the Haymarket of the first year of 1800 the theatre that it was would be complete without mention of Young ; indeed I have to plead the *raconteur's* lack of method in placing him last among the constellations.

Charles Mayne Young was yet another of the actors whose birth coincided with the death of Foote. He, too, began life in the City, but the desk was soon exchanged for the dressing-room, and after a début at Liverpool under the name of Green, a successful appearance at Manchester, a return to Liverpool, and a triumph at Glasgow, the younger Colman fetched him to the Haymarket, where he made his début as Hamlet. Opinions are divided as to his performance, but it is still spoken of as among the great Hamlets since Shakespeare wrote his play.

"Those who can recollect Young's Hamlet," said Donaldson, "must admit that it has never been equalled." Whether this be flattery or no, there can be no doubt that it was a very fine performance, though probably his greatest part was that of Iago, which he played to Kean's Othello—a truly wonderful combination. "Every one about me," said Kean, "told me he could not hold a farthing rushlight to me, but he can. He is an actor ; and though I flatter myself that he could not act Othello as I do, yet what chance should I have in Iago after him, with his personal advantages and his damned musical voice ? I tell you what, Young is not only an actor such as I did not dream him to have been, but he is a gentleman."

Leigh Hunt described Young's art as being far above Kean's. Other critics have said the opposite. But, as Messrs. Romeike and Curtis remind me so often, critics are apt to disagree.



## CHAPTER VIII

IF the word "star" means merely a player worthy in every respect of recognition even by posterity, then I find that I have not yet done with the Colman firmament. No record of those brilliant years which lay between 1794 and 1820, when the Little Theatre was razed to the ground, would be complete without a mention of Suett, Dowton, Munden, and Terry, those actors whose names are less known to-day than their talents deserved.

Dicky Suett, or "Dicky Gossip" as his familiars called him, was Colman the younger's great low comedian. His early vocation was the choir of St. Paul's Cathedral, where he was known by his fellow-choristers as "cherub Dicky." So far as one can judge by the old records and criticisms, Suett in his own line must have been one of the best comic actors who have ever lived. The Haymarket audiences adored him, and he beamed his love for them perpetually over the footlights; for he was one of those jovial creatures for whom even posterity has no bad word. A slave of Cupid and a lover of the bottle, he literally smiled his way through life, and wherever he smiled, laughter invariably greeted him. He had, too, an irresistible laugh of his own, and although no wit, his humour bubbled over.

"Thousands of hearts yet respond to the chuckling  
'Oh La' " of Dicky Suett, brought back to their re-

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membrances by the faithful transcript of his friend Mathews' mimicry," wrote Lamb. "He drolled upon the stock of these two syllables richer than the cuckoo."

Suett was one of those careless, improvident fellows who go through life ignorant of the meaning of the word trouble. In fact the only thing that troubled him was the bottle, which often sent him to bed disturbed by nightmare. He died in Robert Palmer's arms, exclaiming, "Oh! Oh La, Bobby!" His friends mourned his loss with very real sorrow, and the stage lost one whom "Shakespeare foresaw when he framed his fools and jesters." In one way Suett was the most conscientious of actors, for when cast for the part of a drunkard he took care that Nature should assist his performance. His breakfast was generally adorned with a bottle of rum and another of brandy, but his habits seem seldom to have interfered with his work, though they probably shortened his life. His legs were the most remarkable part of him. So thin were they, says Lamb, that "a doubt or a scruple must have made him falter, a sigh have pulled him down; the weight of a frown had staggered him; a wrinkle made him lose his balance." Of Suett, John Kemble once said to Michael Kelly, "My dear Mick, Penruddock has lost a powerful ally in Suett. Sir, I have acted the part with many Weasels, and good ones too, but none of them could work up my passions to the pitch Suett did. He had a comical, impertinent way of thrusting his head into my face which called forth all my irritable sensations. The effect upon me was irresistible." Suett lies buried in St. Paul's Churchyard. He was among Mrs. Inchbald's many rejected suitors.

Terry it was who gave the parting benediction to

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the Little Theatre before the house-breakers set their evil hands upon it. His blessing took the form of a farewell address. Here it is :

“ Ladies and Gentlemen,—This night closes the performances at this theatre, which in consequence of the great improvements in this part of the capital is, it seems, to be pulled down. Yet it is not without regret that we take our leave of a building which has been honoured with your liberal protection for more than half a century, and which has introduced so many celebrated authors and favourite performers to your flattering approbation and the distinction of your patronage. Ladies and Gentlemen, various unforeseen circumstances have arisen to depress this property ; and the constant encroachment of the winter theatres upon its season (originally established under a Royal Patent) has so materially injured it as to threaten its very existence, and to reduce the proprietors to the alternative of either seriously submitting to the annihilation of their interests, or assiduously struggling to obtain an independent company.

“ The preparations for a new theatre are in a forward state, and the proprietors confidently trust that by next season they shall be able to welcome their kind patrons in a theatre more commodious and worthy of their countenance and protection.

“ And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, the proprietors beg you to accept their most grateful acknowledgments for your liberal support, and to assure you that it will be their unremitting study to merit your favour and ensure a continuance of your protection. All the performers, Ladies and Gentlemen, desire to unite their grateful thanks for your distinguished approbation, and we all most cordially bid you farewell.”

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Mr. Terry's career is, I admit, more particularly interesting to me in that he made his *début* on the London stage at the Haymarket Theatre in the character of Lord Ogleby. According to the contemporary critics, he had a peculiar genius for portraying old men, and his success in "The Clandestine Marriage" was instantaneous. Terry was originally intended for an architect, but stage fever soon got hold of him, and he had his early training in stagecraft in the country. After leaving the Haymarket he played at Covent Garden under Elliston, until in 1825 he bought the Adelphi in partnership with Mr. Yates. Good luck attended this venture for the first two seasons, but Fortune soon proved herself fickle and the theatre was closed, Mr. Terry having to compound with his creditors. The worries attendant on his management seriously affected Terry's health, and his memory grew so imperfect that he was obliged to retire from the stage altogether.

Terry seems to have been a clever, agreeable, honourable fellow, with few of those vices that are nearly always the companions of anecdotes. His pet weakness was an imitation of Scott, whose great admirer he was. He imitated his frown to perfection, and reproduced his voice and accent so well that, though born in Bath, he was often taken for a Scotchman.

A good story is told of Terry and Hook. One day, when this clever couple were out walking together, they came to a house which emitted so temptingly the smell of dinner that it brought them to a full stop. "I envy the diners," said Terry, as a delicious whiff of roast venison was wafted to his hungry nostrils. Hook laughed, and made him a bet that *he*, at any rate, would dine with the company, adding that if Terry would call for him at ten o'clock he would give him

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a faithful account of what happened. Terry, incredulous, agreed, and Hook knocked and walked in. He was immediately taken to the drawing-room, and at once set himself to please the company, a task in which he succeeded so well that by the time the host noticed the unbidden guest he had become such a general favourite that his offer to retire, and his apologies for having made a mistake, were ignored, and he was begged to remain and dine. After dinner, Hook, whose jokes had kept the guests in roars of laughter throughout the meal, sat himself down at the piano and began one of his extempore songs.

As he was singing the clock struck ten, and in walked Terry, punctual to the minute. Whereupon Hook burst out—

“I am very much pleased with your fare,  
Your cellar’s as prime as your cook ;  
My friend’s Mr. Terry, the player,  
And I’m Mr. Theodore Hook.”

Munden was another of those low comedians whose faces formed no small part of their fortune. The son of a poulterer, he tried his hand as apothecary’s assistant and attorney’s clerk before he took to the stage. Unlike the other low comedians of his day, his chief amusement was the theatre. His grimaces were absolutely irresistible, and the audiences of the day literally yelled at him. One night, when playing Obadiah in “The Committee,” the audience found him funnier than ever. Obadiah has to be plied with liquor by Teague, and Munden made such extraordinary faces over the draught that the whole house, including the actors on the stage and at the wings, shrieked with laughter. The scene over, Munden went off the stage, and no sooner was he hidden from



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the sight of the audience than he began to bellow like a bull. "Bring me a stomach pump!" he roared, holding his sides. "I'm a dead man; I've been poisoned. Lamp oil, lamp oil, every drop of it!"

And lamp oil it proved to be. The property man had mistaken the bottle for one filled with sherry and water!

Munden was asked afterwards why on earth he had allowed the whole contents of the bottle to be poured down his throat when he could so easily have shown that something was the matter.

"My dear sir," he replied, "there was such a glorious roar at the first face I made upon swallowing it that I hadn't the heart to spoil the scene by interrupting the effect!"

I need not add that Munden was a conscientious actor.

But Munden was a less conscientious creditor. Every time he took a benefit he persuaded Moncrieff to write a comic song for him. When the author delivered it Munden would pat him on the back and assure him that he was a lad after his own soul. "I knew O'Keefe, sir, and George Colman, sir, and every one of them, sir, in the best days, but by the Lord Harry, sir, none of them could write me a song like you, sir."

Moncrieff grew weary of this unsubstantial reward, and at last suggested something pecuniary by way of recompense. Whereupon Munden suddenly remembered a very pressing engagement, and disappeared!

Charles Lamb was one of Munden's greatest admirers. "When you think he has exhausted his battery of looks in unaccountable warfare with your gravity, suddenly he sprouts out an entirely new set of features

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like Hydra. He is not one, but legion; not so much a comedian, as a company! If his name could be multiplied like his countenance, it would fill a play-bill. He, and he alone, literally makes faces. I should not be surprised to see him some day put out the head of a river-horse, or come forth a pewit, or lapwing—some feathered metamorphosis."

The best compliment Munden ever had paid him came from a gentleman at Brighton, who, having witnessed his Old Philpot in "The Citizen," congratulated him on his father's talent!

Dowton was another of the Haymarket's low comedians, but of a more refined model than Munden, to whom he paid the compliment of being jealous of him. He was the son of a grocer, and nephew of a baker, but neither sugar nor bread could keep him from the footlights, and, unlike the majority of his contemporaries, he found the path to success comparatively smooth. His chief failing was an extreme shortness of temper, but it stood him in good stead when he played the parts of irritable old gentlemen, in which he was natural in more senses than one.

It was Michael Kelly who discovered him at the Tunbridge Wells Theatre. "We were all delighted with Dowton's performance, particularly the Jew, which was a very fine specimen of natural acting," wrote Kelly. "I was so struck with it, that I called out to a gentleman with whom I was acquainted, who was sitting within three boxes of our party—'This is fine acting; this, I'll answer for it, will do.'" Dowton heard the remark on the stage.

Sheridan thought a good deal of Dowton's acting, and once declared that "If he ever wrote a comedy, the two performers for whom he should take most pains would be Dowton and Jack Johnstone." It

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was Dowton, it will be remembered, who indirectly brought about the riot at the Haymarket by insisting upon playing "The Tailor" for his benefit.

Chief among the female ornaments of the Haymarket Theatre in the early part of the last century was Mrs. Glover, who was born of the theatre, and made her first appearance at the extremely tender age of five. It can almost be said that she was a "star" from the very first; at any rate, George Frederick Cooke thought so much of the baby-actress that he played Glumdalca to her Tom Thumb, and in the love scene put the diminutive "Miss Betterton," as she was then, on the palm of his hand, to the intense delight of the audience. Once grown up she came to London and scored triumphantly in tragedy, but though she played Hamlet only to gain the approval of Kean, and scored success after success at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, it is by her performances at the Haymarket that she is best known to posterity. Her Mrs. Malaprop, Mrs. Candour, and Mrs. Heidelberg must have been perfect performances, which were unhindered by her stoutness. Mrs. Glover was possessed of one of the most remarkable memories of any actors or actresses who ever lived, and in this respect must have run Henderson very close. One night in the Haymarket green-room the conversation turned upon the drama of days gone by; whereupon Mrs. Glover, to prove a point in the argument, stood up and repeated scene after scene of the tragedy of "Percy," though she had neither read nor seen the play for thirty years. The story may sound tall, but there seems good evidence of its truth.

In addition to her theatrical talents, Mrs. Glover bore the best of reputations for her virtue and her kindly heart. To the last she kept her good looks,

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and Leslie's description of her as "monstrously fat" was more unkind than true. Throughout her very long career she only disappointed her audience twice—a record in the history of the stage, I should imagine. Moreover, so far as I can discover, no contemporary, not even a contemporary Pressman, spoke ill of her, and pens were not so generous then as they are to-day.

With Mrs. Glover I come to an end of my list of those who shed radiance upon the Little Theatre at the beginning of the last century. Not that for one moment do I attempt to assume that this list is a perfect one. There are many omissions I know. The names of Johnston, of Fawcett, of Wewitzer—to mention but three that I have left out—will at once leap to the memory. But being confined within the printer's space limits I have no room for all, and have selected but those who have left the biggest reputations and the best anecdotes behind them. There will be room for them all when the real history of the Haymarket comes to be written, though I envy no man the task who chases all the players of the Haymarket from that summer theatre—as it was then—to the winter theatres, and from them back to the Haymarket again. The records of the theatre are a Chinese puzzle more difficult than that devised by any Celestial.

Over the years that elapsed between the opening of the new Theatre Royal Haymarket and the day when Benjamin Webster became its manager I must pass with greater speed than has hitherto marked my progression, my excuse being that after the brilliant period of Colman's management interest in the story of the Haymarket slackens until we come to the 'thirties—to the days made glorious by the names of Macready, Webster, Tyrone Power, and last, but

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not least, Buckstone, who was afterwards to take Webster's place as manager.

The new Haymarket first opened its doors to the public on July 4, 1821, with "The Rivals," a new operetta called "Paul and Virginia; or, Love in the Vineyard," and an address by Mr. Terry, who was as felicitous at the christening of the new theatre as he had been impressive at the funeral of the old, the last vestiges of whose remains were rapidly disappearing.

Luck soon came to the new playhouse, for in 1825 it secured what was at that date a record run with "Paul Pry," which played for 114 nights, Liston being the chief attraction of an excellent cast which included William Farren and Madame Vestris. The year 1822 had seen the début of Miss Paton, afterwards Mrs. Wood, who made her first bow in the character of Susanna in "The Marriage of Figaro," and sang herself straightway into the affections of her audience. Mrs. Wood was a remarkable person, for she began life by composing several pieces of music at the age of five, and was one of those rare examples of an infant prodigy—and more especially of the feminine gender—who ever attain to success after they have passed their teens. So soon as she had reached the age of eight her father gave several concerts for her, but a few years later he had the good sense to withdraw her from the platform and give her a chance of completing an education that until then had scarcely been advanced.

But I had almost forgotten one of the most interesting of all stage figures—Madame Vestris, the half Italian, half English lady, who within twenty years of her first appearance on the London boards was earning the salary of a Prime Minister. Madame Vestris's father was a brother of the great Bartolozzi, and her mother



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was a native of Liverpool. When Eliza Lucy, as the great actress was christened, was but twelve years old her father died, leaving his widow and child with scarce a penny. Her education completed, Eliza Lucy obtained an engagement at the famous San Carlo theatre of Naples, where she was much admired for her beauty and her handsome figure. From Naples she went to nearly every capital in Europe by turn and eventually reached London, where all she could get in the way of an engagement was a season as chorus girl at the King's Theatre. This over, she went back to the Continent, only to return to England to play at the French Theatre in St. James's Square. During this season she met and fell in love with M. Armond Vestris, the principal dancer at the Italian Opera. They were married in 1818, and Madame Vestris retired from the stage for some time, to return to it as the leading character in "Il Ratto di Proserpina." Her husband died soon after, and in 1822 the great Elliston engaged her for Drury Lane, where her Don Giovanni and Captain Macheath took the town by storm. Between this engagement and her first season at the Haymarket was a provincial tour.

The Haymarket management paid her £40 per night, or £240 a week—a sum which sounds almost incredible in these days, when £100 is by no means a common salary for a leading lady. Madame Vestris married Charles Mathews *en secondes noces*. As an actress it is difficult to place her. Some critics have raved about her; others have declared her performances to have been hugely overrated. But there was no doubt about her popularity, and she had English playgoers at her feet. America did not think so much of her; in fact her American tour was a "frost," though some declared this failure to have been caused by reports as to

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her private character previous to her second marriage.\* Her return caused an absolute sensation throughout the country. People stood aghast at the very idea of the Yankees daring to spurn their favourite, and a wag of the period declared that unless the popular excitement showed signs of cooling war between England and America would undoubtedly result.

So far as one can judge, however, the sole reason why America would have little or none of Madame Vestris was that they thought her an overrated actress. In her early days she may have deserved the fatuous praises showered upon her, but by the time she set sail across the herring-pond she was no longer in her prime. Nor was it only in America that the Vestris failed to find favour with the critics. Her visit to Edinburgh in the 'twenties produced a very cutting notice from one of the leading prints. "In a very inferior line of parts she is graceful and clever, and this is all the praise to which we deem her entitled. She has not made a great impression in Edinburgh, and the general opinion is that she is but a second-rate actress. In one word, she knows how to do a smart thing, but she has little or no conception of aught beyond." So ran the Scotch critic's opinion, which was probably nearer the mark than many of the criticisms over the border.

Her return to the English stage after her American visit brought her one of the most magnificent receptions with which an actress has ever been favoured. Hundreds of people had to be content with a glimpse of the Vestris arriving at or leaving the theatre, for seats were at a premium. She made her entrance to the tune of "Home, sweet Home," and the audience worshipped their idol more madly than ever. Flowers were showered upon her, and at the end of the evening she was called over and over again.

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. But I have wandered too far from the Haymarket. There, at any rate, Madame Vestris had no fear of failure, and she was probably at her best when at the new Theatre Royal. Her "drawing" powers were proved by her colossal salary; but one wonders how the management can have seen results in the way of profits at the end of each week, though it must be remembered that the Haymarket of those days held considerably more money than in this year of grace, the alterations made by Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft having considerably diminished the holding capacity, while at the same time making the Haymarket what it is—we flatter ourselves—the most comfortable theatre in London.

Madame Vestris's salary, by the way, is one of the largest ever paid to a player in the whole history of the stage; but Edmund Kean, I believe, broke the record when, in 1829, he received no less than £50 per night, his first benefit bringing him in the huge sum of £2000. In this connection, however, it must be remembered that those were the days of comparatively few theatres, and, despite the limited Press, enormous popular interest in all that appertained to the stage. It is quite a mistake to suppose that because all the thousand and one papers of the day publish dramatic columns and personal paragraphs without number about us poor players, the interest taken in the actor and all his ways is as great as in the years gone by. The paragraph has removed that veil of mystery that covered the Footes, the Keans, the Macreadys, and, above all, the stages of the years that are passed. The British public of to-day knows how the trick is done. They like to see the cards shuffled, but the sleight of hand awes them no more. They no longer wonder how the rabbit came into the top-hat, nor gaze open-

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mouthed at the disappearing lady. The Press, eager for our good (or is it hungry for copy?), has given us away, with the result that with all our popularity we have lost half our interest. We are no longer rogues or vagabonds, but respectable, ordinary everyday folk, who paint our faces and simulate characters that do not belong to us, instead of earning our living in the traffic of cheese, or the dissection of domestic carcasses. We even go to church, and are not all believers in the necessity of wife-beating for the attainment of conjugal felicity. And how can a great British public be expected to take absorbing interest in a man who hands round the plate or makes a mustard-bath for his cold-stricken spouse?

But digression, I am assured, is even more dangerous for an author than respectability for a poor player.

Madame Vestris was well supported on her appearance in "Paul Pry." Of Liston's genius I have already written, and William Farren was one of the best character-actors the stage has ever known. It seems hard to realise that the William Farren of 1825—"old Farren," as he is best known—was the father of the William Farren of 1903, that most perfect of Sir Peter Teazles, who has more than proved the doctrine of heredity in half the theatres of London town.

The William Farren of 1825 is perhaps best described in the words of Leigh Hunt, who wrote:

"He is a young man who plays old parts, whom great art assists in disguising his voice, his shape and his features, affecting in the full vigour of life the decrepitude and powerless passions and vanities of age, and succeeding in proportion as he is unlike himself, and as he reverses all his own hearty and pleasurable sympathies. His success in this way is undoubtedly curious, and when, as in Lord Ogleby, he

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engrafts on this assumption of age and decay singular delicacy of manner, and aristocratic vivacity and pride with the appearance of physical weakness, the portraiture which he gives is no less agreeable than singular." "One of the most finished actors by whom the stage has been adorned during the present century," Henry Morley has called him, and the criticism was probably not exaggerated. His great part was Lord Ogleby in "The Clandestine Marriage." The last time he appeared in the character was in 1851 at the Haymarket, when he said good-bye to the theatre surrounded by nearly all the leading actors and actresses of the English stage. Curiously enough, William Farren made his first appearance in London as Sir Peter Teazle, the character in which his son has so often delighted us.

The years that followed the successful run of "Paul Pry" are only remarkable for the appearance of some well-known actors, and are conspicuous by the absence of novelty and exciting incident. But before I come to Webster's management I must give a few lines to one or two who helped Madame Vestris, Liston, "Old" Farren, and Mrs. Glover to keep the lamp of the Haymarket burning brightly.

Vandenhoff was one of the most interesting of the actors who played under Mr. Morris's management. He was the son of a gentleman, who was much loved by the ladies of Salisbury for his skill in preparing those concoctions that turn raven tresses into golden sunbeams, and make silky black those objectionable carrot locks that are the glory of neither man nor woman. Vandenhoff *père* was a strict Roman Catholic, and destined his son to the priesthood, but an inborn longing for tragedy compelled him to the stage, on which he first appeared at the age of eighteen in his



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native town. From Salisbury he went to Liverpool, and at Liverpool and Manchester he was for many years the tragic attraction. But the London magnet drew him to town, which he hoped to take by storm by ingeniously compounding the styles of Kemble, Kean, Macready, and Young. This mixture, however, had little drawing power, and his manager did his best to get rid of him. But Vandenhoff had an agreement, and limpet-like he stuck to it, until it died a natural death. Then back to Liverpool he went, there to find another tragedian, by name Slater, reigning in his stead. Vandenhoff, however, was not to be ousted, and the rivalry of the two tragedians was taken up with much warmth by the good people of Liverpool. "The theatre," I quote from a contemporary print, "immediately became the arena of discordant noises and ruffianly bruising matches, and the boxes, pit, and gallery were nightly adorned with flaming placards exhibited by the partisans of each would-be mimic monarch, the contents of which was as disgraceful to the drama as to common-sense. Nor was this spirit of opposition confined to the theatre alone, for, 'Vandenhoff for ever and the good old cause'; 'Slater for ever, and no Catholic,' disgusted the eyes of the passengers who could read it chalked upon every street wall and dirty alley of that extensive and populous town. The end of all this scene of fire and fury was that the pupil of Ignatius was safely reseated in the tragic chair, which the man of genius lacking tact was forced to vacate for the cell of a madhouse, where, melancholy and broken-hearted, he shortly died and was forgotten!"

In his prime Vandenhoff was distinctly an actor to be reckoned with. His *Coriolanus* was, from all accounts, a distinguished performance, and his *Richard*

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has been sealed with the approval of the critics. Exceptionable is the only adjective to apply to his private character, and education having taught him to be a gentleman, he never forgot the lesson. He was possessed of that dogged pluck that has success in its train, and he literally made the London public appreciate him.

In addition to Madame Vestris and Mrs. Glover, the Haymarket of those days had two sound actresses in the persons of Mrs. Waylett and Mrs. Honey.

Mrs. Waylett was one of the best chambermaids the stage, or at any rate the Haymarket, has ever known. She had mischief in her eyes, and tripped about the stage in so light-hearted a fashion that she was on good terms with her audience from her first performance. She acquired a passion for the stage at an extremely early age, and her father, a Bath tradesman, had the good sense to encourage a natural bent.

Another pert romp of an actress was Mrs. Honey (*née* Laura Bell), who buzzed about the stage so gaily that she soon became known as the honey "bee." She was remarkable for her voluble tongue, which produced an impromptu from the scene-painter of Sadler's Wells. He wrote :

"O Laura Bell ! O Laura Bell !  
Confound your noisy chatter ;  
Your little tongue does surely tell  
No Belle's without a clapper."

Mrs. Honey shone least at the Haymarket, where she appears to have been completely lost. Her husband was drowned by the upsetting of a pleasure-boat near Battersea Bridge, and her amours subsequent to his death kept the hungry gossips satisfied for many a day.

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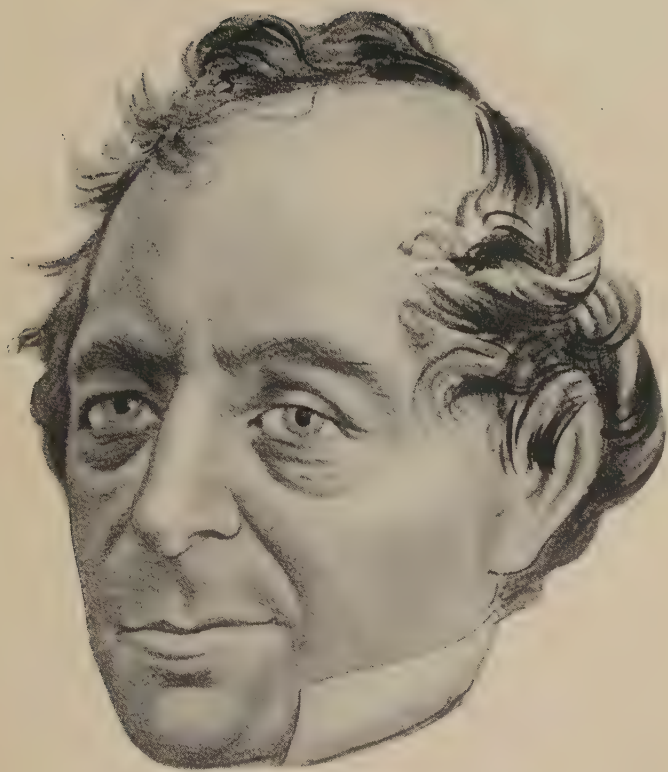
Another notable engagement during the year that immediately preceded Webster's management was that of Ellen Tree, who was afterwards to become the wife of Charles Kean and to play several times with her husband at the Haymarket. She was an unequal actress, who was a far better comedian than tragedian, though her Lady Teazle seems to have ranked among the least of her achievements. A native of the South of Ireland, she had all the Irish charm, and her appearance was much in her favour. Her success at the Haymarket in the days before her marriage was considerable, both she and Vandenhoff receiving high praise for their performances in Serjeant Talfourd's "Ion."

Of the rest of the great players under Mr. Morris's management I have already written. They include Liston, Charles Kemble, Elliston, and Mrs. Glover, who made the theatrical sensation of 1833 by appearing as Falstaff, for which a contemporary critic was rude enough to say that she required but little "make up." Buckstone was another famous member of Mr. Morris's company, as was Benjamin Webster, but they have chapters to themselves.

## CHAPTER IX

I CONFESS to a "first night" feeling as I draw nearer "modern times." Hitherto, with scarce an exception, I have dealt with those who flourished when no living man can remember them, and my inaccuracies have been cloaked by the mist of time. But on arrival at the year 1837, when Benjamin Webster took command of the Theatre Royal Haymarket, I find myself confronted by the names of players whose performances my comparatively tender forty years make it impossible for me to have witnessed, yet whose acting is still a recollection to more than one greybeard whose heavy critical hand I already feel. Moreover, I have no mean players to deal with. Macready, the younger Mathews, Helen Faucit, Tyrone Power, Benjamin Wrench, Mrs. Fitzwilliam, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, Samuel Phelps, Madame Celeste, and Mrs. Stirling were among the players who brought honour to the Haymarket under Webster; while Lord Lytton, Sheridan Knowles, and Douglas Jerrold are numbered among the dramatists whom the manager encouraged, and who repaid him by giving him success after success. But with Webster I leave biography behind me, confining myself to an anecdote here and there.

Webster's introduction to the stage augured ill for his future success. At the age of nineteen he was foolish enough to become the husband of a widow



BENJAMIN WEBSTER AT THE AGE OF SEVENTY-THREE

PLATE V





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with a ready-made family and, presumably, little or nothing to bless herself with. Webster having no means at all, his early married days were scarcely rosy. From town to town he tramped with considerably less than the proverbial half-crown in his pocket, only to meet with refusal after refusal. At last he came across Mr. Beverley, who was going to open the Croydon Theatre for a short season. His first application was for the onerous post of "extra gentleman."

"Full," was Mr. Beverley's reply.

"Little business and utility?"

"Full," replied Mr. Beverley.

"Harlequin?"

"Don't like male dancers, *their* legs don't draw," said Mr. Beverley.

"Orchestra?"

"What's your instrument?"

"Violin, tenor, violoncello, double bass, and double drums." "By Nero," swore Mr. Beverley, "let's have a taste of your quality on the violin." Webster complied, with the result that he was engaged as leader at a salary of one guinea per week.

"Had a storm of gold fallen on me"—I quote Webster's own words—"it could not have delighted Semele more than me. I felt myself plucked out of the slough of despond. I had others to support, board myself, and to get out of debt. I resolved to walk to Croydon, ten miles every day to rehearsal and back to Shoreditch on twopence a day—one pennyworth of oatmeal, and one pennyworth of milk—and I did it for six weeks, Sundays excepted, when I indulged in the luxury of a shin of beef and ox-cheek. The gentlemen in the gallery pelted the orchestra with mutton pies. At first indignation was upper-

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most, but on reflection we made a virtue of necessity, and collecting the fragments of the not very light pastry ate them under the stage, and, whatever they were made of, considered them ambrosia. At the end of the sixth week I had so pleased Mr. Beverley and his son Harry that I was asked to give a specimen of my terpsichorean abilities in a sailor's hornpipe. I essayed the task, buoyed up with hope, dashed on the stage, got through the double shuffle, the toes and heels, though feeling faint; but at last, despite every effort, I broke down through sheer exhaustion, consequent upon a near approach to starvation, and the curtain dropped on me and my hopes, and I burst into an agony of tears. However, this mourning was soon turned into joy, for Mr. Beverley behaved like a father to me, and engaged me as walking-gentleman for his London theatre, where I made my first appearance as Henry Morland in "The Heir-at-Law," which, to avoid legal proceedings, he called "The Lord's Warming Pan."

The Haymarket owes Webster much. He it was who was the first to light it with the then precious gas, and he enlarged the proscenium by eleven feet. Moreover, it was Webster who secured for the Haymarket a licence to keep open the entire year. From the earliest days of his management he displayed a liberality that gave no little encouragement to the drama of the day. At the close of the season which ended on the 15th of January 1841 Webster made a speech, a passage in which is worth noting:

"It is with some degree of pride that through your kind encouragement I am enabled to state to you that at the 'Little Theatre' in the Haymarket, besides several well approved farces, three original five-act plays have been produced and supported by

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the biggest available talent in the country, and that after paying upwards of £9000 to auxiliary talent, nearly £2000 to dramatic authors, and 252 nights' salary to every person regularly engaged at this establishment, I shall wind up the season's account with a very considerable profit. For the future, Ladies and Gentlemen, I beg to inform you that that high-minded and liberal nobleman, the present Lord Chamberlain, having taken into his consideration the strict devotion of this theatre to the interests of the legitimate drama, has kindly granted a special licence of two months in addition to the present season."

Lord Lytton's "Money" was Webster's chief production during his management of the Haymarket. He also produced Westland Marston's "Heart of the World" and "Strathmore," Sheridan Knowles's "Love Chase," and Douglas Jerrold's "Time Works Wonders."

Douglas Jerrold, by the way, was the first editor of *Lloyds News*. He made the usual application to be put on the "free list," but Webster made it a rule never to grant the favour until a paper had been twelve months in existence. At the end of twelve months, therefore, Jerrold applied again. "My dear Jerrold," replied Webster, "you've abused me steadily for twelve months; I think you'd better go on!"

Another author to whom he accorded his patronage was Serjeant Talfourd, the author of "Ion." One night when Talfourd was in the Haymarket green-room a lady remarked that she had heard a rumour to the effect that he was at work on a new play. "What," exclaimed Douglas Jerrold, "more 'Ions' in the fire!"

Why, possessed as he was of so much talent,

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Webster should have offered a prize of £500 for the best comedy submitted to him, passes my comprehension, just as it has puzzled many a writer before me. That the experiment was a failure is not surprising. The comedy selected by the judges, who consisted of actors and dramatists, was Mrs. Gore's "Quid pro Quo, or the Day of the Dupes." Mrs. Gore was the fashionable novelist of the day, and her comedy was chosen from among nearly one hundred plays submitted for judgment. The audience would have none of it, and the authoress took her beating badly, declaring that it was her sex that brought about the opposition of rival dramatic critics. So far as I have been able to discover there was no ground for this accusation; in fact one has only to read the prize comedy to appreciate the true reasons for its non-success.

Quite apart from his skill as manager of the Haymarket, Benjamin Webster was a great actor—an actor of almost infinite variety. His *Tartuffe* was a great performance; his *Triplet* probably the best the stage has seen. Mrs. Kendal's father after witnessing his performance in "The Queensberry Fête" declared that his god had been destroyed. The "god" was John Emery's performance of the same part. He did not suffer from that fatality a "personality": he could adapt himself to practically whatever character he chose to study. His most brilliant moments were at the old Adelphi, to which he brought fame, just as he had more than continued the prestige gained by the Haymarket under Messrs. Morris and Coleman.

Webster's first year of management was made noteworthy by the début of Samuel Phelps and the appearance of Madame Celeste—the Madame



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Celeste who was afterwards to make the old Adelphi glorious by her Miriam in the "Green Bushes"—or the "Ever Green Bushes" as it might safely be called—and was to join her Haymarket manager as joint lessee and manager of the Adelphi in a few years' time. Another noteworthy engagement in Webster's early days was that of Tyrone Power, one of the best portrayers of Irish character that the stage has ever seen, and an actor whose talents were so much thought of that even Webster found it worth his while to pay him a salary of £150 a week. Curiously enough though his brogue was faultless and he seemed Irish to the backbone Tyrone Power hailed from Wales, Glamorganshire being the county of his birth and David Powell his actual name. His first appearances on the boards were marked by a strong Welsh accent, which was scarcely conducive to success in certain parts, so David looked about him for a cure. In the company with him was a "rale Oirish jintleman," who for the very low price of a few drops of the "crathur" undertook to remove the undesirable accent in a few lessons. David worked hard with his bibulous tutor, but with the result that in losing the Welsh twang he acquired a rich Irish brogue, to which was added a sprinkling of Newcastle *burr*.

With this acquirement he appeared as Romeo—to empty boxes—and it was not until he was persuaded much against his will to play Paddy O'Halloran in a farce by Rodwell that he made the success that accompanied him to the end of his life.

Poor Power met with a tragic end just four years after the opening of the Haymarket under Webster. He was returning from New York, on the *President*, after a successful American tour, but was never

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destined to see England again, for in the terrific gale that raged at the beginning of March 1841 the ship went down with all hands.

I believe it to be a fact that Power's life would have been saved had it not been that he dearly loved a lord. He had arranged to return to England by another boat, but upon some one telling him that a peer was crossing in the *President*, he instantly changed his passage to that ship. Webster, who was a great admirer of Power's, said that he was the most instantaneous London success he had ever known. To mark his appreciation of Power's talent he presented him with two double tickets for the upper-boxes, but only one was ever used—and that Power gave to his landlady.

Tyrone Power's very last appearances in London were made at the Haymarket for his benefit on the 1st of August 1840, when he appeared as Sir Patrick O'Plenipo in "The Irish Ambassador" and Tim More in "The Irish Lion."

Mrs. Fitzwilliam, who was another of Webster's early engagements, had made her theatrical début at the Haymarket at the early age of fourteen. She was born of theatrical parents, and her success was not long in the coming. Fame was brought to her by the part of Madge Wildfire which she "created" at the Surrey. Her greatest theatrical feat was an appearance under Bond's management at the Adelphi in a monologue called "Mrs. Wiggins," in which she, wholly unsupported, sustained no less than seven different characters, and played the violin, the harp, and the piano! She gave the same entertainment in Dublin, and Irishmen to a man voted her a prodigy. Mrs. Fitzwilliam was a great favourite at the Haymarket, and she shared with Power the honours of

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"The Irish Lion." Few more versatile actresses can ever have faced the footlights.

Benjamin Wrench, another of Webster's excellent company, was originally intended for the church, as a living, in the gift of the Bishop of Norwich, had been bequeathed to Benjamin Wrench so long as that name remained in the family, out of respect to the memory of Sir Benjamin Wrench, Bart., the actor's grandfather. One of Wrench's earliest appearances was made at York under the management of the eccentric Tate Wilkinson. On the first night at the end of the piece Wilkinson, who was never prodigal of compliment, came hobbling into Wrench's dressing-room. "I have come, sir," said he, "to tell you that you have a good deal of *roast beef* about you!"

This reminds me of another story—of a more modern manager. He had sent out a provincial company with a fairly well-known young man as the "star." The company arrived at one of the northern cities, but, despite the starring of the juvenile and the reputation brought by the play from London, empty houses ruled. One night, when the young actor was waiting in his dressing-room in a state of abject despondency, who should stroll in, to his horror, but the great London manager! The youthful Roscius stood tremblingly awaiting an outburst of wrath, too nervous even to bid his manager good-day. But to his astonishment the manager himself kept silence, gazing sorrowfully at the young actor for some moments. At last the spell was broken. The manager strolled over to the fireplace, lit a cigar, put his hands into his pockets, and warmed himself luxuriously.

"You're a blooming magnet, I don't think," he said at last. And that was the only comment he made.

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Tate Wilkinson's criticism of Wrench was excellent, and he soon showed of what good roast beef he was made. He was one of the soundest of sound comedians, with a versatility shared by few of his day.

It was the year following Webster's début as manager of the Haymarket Theatre that saw the appearance of the mighty Macready, who during his engagement at the Haymarket appeared as the hero of Lord Lytton's "Sea Captain" and "Money," and of Serjeant Talfourd's "Glencoe" and "The Athenian Captive." Webster paid Macready a salary of over £4000 per season, but there is good reason to believe that he lost nothing by his contract.

As it is but thirty years since Macready passed away I have no excuse for telling over again the story of his life. All who are interested in the career of us poor players know that he was, like Wrench and many another before them, originally intended for the church. Familiar too must be the anecdote attached to his first performance—how Mrs. Siddons, when on a "starring" tour in the North, being dissatisfied with her leading gentleman, begged the elder Macready to let his son take his place, and how the Queen of Tragedy overruled the father's objections, and so started William Charles on a career that was to reach the topmost heights of fame. Possibly though, an anecdote of Macready's *grande manière*, which I came across in an old actor's note-book, may not deserve the "chestnut" condemnation.

While Macready was at Bath he was dubbed with the nickname of "Haughty Mac" on account of the enormous dignity with which he invested himself. One day the veteran Downton arrived at the theatre, and going behind the scenes caught sight of Macready

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giving his daily instructions. The old actor went up to his manager and held out his hand, but to his intense astonishment was waved back by a tremendous sweep of the tragedian's arm.

"Mister Downton, sir. What would my people think of such familiarity!"

When Edmund Kean and Macready played in the same pieces at Drury Lane the rivalry between the two was intense, and it was usual to consult them in the course of the evening as to what they would appear in next. One night when the prompter was sent to ask Mr. Macready what he would play with Mr. Kean, the great tragedian frowned upon him till he blushed.

"Fore Gad, sir," he roared, "how should I know what the man would like to play?"

The prompter retired to seek the desired information from Mr. Kean.

"D—n it, sir," said Mr. Kean sharply, "how the h—l should I know what the fellow can play?"

In Macready's early days under Elliston's management he met with a nasty rebuff. Coming into the green room dressed as Rob Roy he asked, "Pray, Mr. Elliston, when do we act Shakespeare?"

"When?" repeated Elliston; "when you can!"

When Macready was in America he rehearsed Hamlet with a Guildenstern who would come too close. Macready remonstrated, but with no effect. At last the actor came so close that Macready said, "What, sir, you would not shake hands with Hamlet, would you?"

"I don't know," said Guildenstern, "I do with my own President."

Curiously enough, more than one writer on the stage has fallen into the error of putting the Haymarket



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Theatre down as the scene of Macready's farewell. As a matter of fact it was at Drury Lane that he said good-bye. On the morning of the great day Macready wrote in his diary: "My first thought when I awoke was that that day was to be the close of my professional life. I meditated on it, and not one thin line of regret intermingled with the placid satisfaction accompanying my performance of every act needfully preparative to the coming event." Yet the papers of the day tell us that he spoke "feelingly and fervently" to the audience. His address wound up with an explanation of his reason for retirement:

"Because I would not willingly abate one jot of your esteem, I retire with the belief of yet unfailling powers, rather than linger on the scene to set in contrast the feeble style of age with the more vigorous exertions of better years."

Those who can still remember Macready before his retirement say that one of the most remarkable experiences they ever had was to hear him read a part. However dull and pointless the lines might have seemed before, the moment Macready spoke them they held a new meaning. Many an actor of those days, disgusted at first with a new rôle allotted to him, was overjoyed, after Macready had read his lines, at having been given such an excellent part.

So conscientious an actor was Macready that during the hours of performance he was always the character he happened to be playing—off as well as on the stage. The moment he quitted the stage he went straight to his dressing-room to await the next call. He would never see a visitor between the acts, and gave the strictest orders that no letters or messages, however urgent, were to be brought to him during the performance.

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Another of Webster's earliest supporters who remained until the end of the management and eventually became manager himself was Mr. John Baldwin Buckstone, to whom two chapters are devoted elsewhere. But a story of "Bucky" while a member of Webster's company must be told here. There was nothing that Bucky liked better than to go to a race-meeting when opportunity offered, and no race he enjoyed more than the Derby. So one Derby day, being only wanted that night for the last farce, he determined on an expedition to Epsom with a jolly party of friends. All went well until the time came for the journey home, when the crowd was so great that the carriage containing "Bucky" and his friends got blocked, with the result that he arrived in London after the theatre had closed. On going to bed he found a call for rehearsal the next morning. When he got to the theatre no one, to his intense astonishment, referred to his absence the night before. At last his curiosity was so piqued that he asked a fellow-member of the company to come out and have a drink. Once inside a neighbouring tavern Buckstone asked:

"How did you get on last night? What did you play?"

"Oh, Mr. Stickland was taken ill, and the farce had to be changed," was the answer.

Buckstone had never been missed at all.

This story reminds me of an incident that occurred to Harrison and myself not long ago.

Major Baden-Powell, "B.P.'s" brother, who was quartered at Aldershot at the time, was to play one afternoon in an amateur performance in aid of the widows and orphans of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. Everyone else was ready to begin, but the Major was

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nowhere to be found. The curtain was kept down, the band went on playing—still, no Major! At last a young officer came up and said:

“Mr. Maude, the last I saw of Major Baden Powell this morning before I left Aldershot was in a balloon about 2000 feet above the earth.”

The consternation of the other amateurs may be imagined, and I began to be fearful of a tragic ending to the afternoon, when in rushed the Major breathless and full of apology.

Benjamin Webster was distinctly popular with his company. He seems to have been a most good-natured manager, always ready with a joke. One of the less well-known members of his company, Harry Widdicombe, had a very easy season one year, for he was not given a part the whole time until the very last night of all. It so happened that on the morning of the last day Widdicombe took it into his head to go to Gravesend, where he had such a capital time, that he missed the boat and could not get to London at all that night.

“Well, I’m hanged, Harry,” said Webster next morning to the truant, “I’ve paid you ten months’ salary and never used you, and the only time you were wanted you didn’t turn up!”

Even in Webster’s time the actor had not quite given up the habit of addressing the audience. One night during the middle of a piece a gentleman in the dress circle got up and began to put on his coat.

“I beg pardon, sir,” called one of the company from the stage, “but the piece is not over yet.”

“Much obliged to you for the information, sir,” returned the gentleman, giving his coat a final tug, “but I’ve had quite enough of it.”

Webster was very superstitious. One day when

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he and Macready had met to sign an agreement he suddenly remembered it was Friday, and begged to be excused putting his name to the paper until the next day. Macready readily agreed, declaring that nothing on earth would induce him either to sign on that unlucky day.

A particularly interesting fact in connection with Webster's management of the Haymarket is that his was the first company to go on tour. Whenever the theatre closed, the members of the company went off in a body and rented a small provincial theatre for five nights at a time (they never played on Saturdays), all sharing equally. Any one who happened to be "out of the bill" made himself useful in front of the house, and no one objected to playing small parts or insisted on "fat" ones. It was quite a mutual benefit society, and each member often netted quite a nice little sum. It was then that the foundations of the old stock companies first came to be undermined, though they received a ruder shock when in later years Buckstone took his company on tour.

But these early provincial tours were not always successful. On one occasion they arrived on a Saturday at a small town in the Midlands exceedingly short of cash. They were met by the local manager, who assured them that business would be excellent, and relying on this prospect proceeded to enjoy their Sunday with the money that remained to them. But on the Monday the manager called on them with consternation written all over his face. The local magistrates had refused permission for the theatre to be opened. They petitioned, but all in vain, and the advent of the magistrates' final refusal coincided with the arrival of the landlady's bill, and

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the emphatic statement on the part of that worthy that not another morsel of food should they touch until the bill was paid. The woman was as good as her word, and the unfortunate company underwent the agonies of Tantalus at the sound of clattering knives and forks and the sight of passing pastry-cooks and butchers, to say nothing of the savoury smell of dinners that greeted them on every hand. At last when evening came the landlord arrived with beer, bread, and cheese, but warned them that on the morrow he should take them before a magistrate. Visions of prison-cells reduced them to desperation. A plan of flight was formed by Buckstone, and in the middle of the night the actors and actresses, with their spare clothing and properties disposed as best could be managed about their persons, silently climbed out of the window, looking like nothing more than a series of fat men and women from a penny gaff. The moment they reached the street off they ran, never stopping till they reached a cornfield some two miles off! From this they made their way to the neighbouring town, little the worse for an adventure that might have ended most disastrously.

Webster's management was literally a series of brilliant engagements. Macready, Farren, Power, Buckstone, Phelps, Madame Celeste, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mathews, and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean—what an array of names! No wonder that the theatre flourished and took a leading place among the houses of the metropolis!

By the time Charles Kean reached the Haymarket stage he had improved enormously in his methods. His earliest efforts were disappointing, and the glamour of his father's mighty name had caused the critics to put him under the microscope. But if ever a son





JOHN BALDWIN BUCKSTONE

PLATE VI



## THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

inherited gifts from a father, Charles Kean's talents came from his sire. Not that one can believe for one moment that he ever betrayed the genius of the mighty Edmund, though some of the critics have compared his Hamlet with Macready's, to the latter's disadvantage. His father's mad extravagance, that reduced the family to penury, drove Charles Kean to the theatre. Much as his father wanted him to accept a proffered cadetship the son felt he could not desert his poor mother, destitute of money and the love that was her right. So he determined to try his luck as an actor. His first appearance was made at the Haymarket in a subordinate part, but before he had been long upon the boards the powers of Old Drury offered him an important engagement on the strength of his father's name. He was a failure. "He spoke as though he had a cold or was pressing his finger to his nose," one writer said. Another was good enough to say that his principal fault is "want of keeping. Mr. Kean's voice is weak, his figure puerile as may be expected from his youth, but his countenance has the power of expressing strong passions. What improvement time and experience and study may produce, it is hard to surmise."

But Charles Kean was not of the stuff that bad notices drive to desperation. He knew that he had a great name to live up to, and he had the good sense to realise his want of training. So he set himself to work. Step by step he climbed, slowly, laboriously, with many heartaches, but with the vision of his poor ill-used mother ever before him and the warning afforded by the terrible career of his once mighty father, whose powers grew weaker as the son's grew stronger, and who was so soon to pass away. Father and son played together several times at Glasgow,

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Cork, and Dublin. Their first appearance together was at the Glasgow theatre, where they played Brutus and Titus in Howard Payne's tragedy. "We're doing the trick, Charlie," whispered the elder Kean as the audience burst into a roar of applause after an impassioned speech. And from that day Charles Kean began to "do the trick" with more effect, though it was not until after his last appearance with his father that the public realised that he was an actor to be reckoned with.

The awful story of that last appearance has been told so often that I have no right to repeat it. It was probably the most pathetic scene the stage has ever presented. The father, a mere wreck, kept up by bumpers of brandy, so weak that he was doubtful if he could even kneel, the son playing his best and all the time keeping an eye on his father in case he should stagger and fall. And then, just as the mighty Edmund, pulling himself together for one great effort, had uttered Othello's "Farewell" with some of his old energy, he collapsed in his boy's arms, whispering, "I am dying, Charlie; speak to them for me."

Charles Kean finished the season at Covent Garden, but this engagement was not renewed. The next offer came from Drury Lane—but it was only £15 a week, and he refused it. He determined to go back to the provinces.

"I will only come back when I can command my own terms of £50 per night," he said to the treasurer of Drury Lane. "Then say good-bye to London Town for ever," replied that gentleman, "for the days of such salaries are past and gone." The treasurer, however, was wrong, for five years later Kean drove in his carriage and pair to Drury Lane with a contract in his pocket for £50 per night. Charles Kean first

## THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

appeared under Webster in 1840, and two years afterwards married Miss Ellen Tree, to whom I have already alluded. Not long after this marriage they appeared together at the Haymarket. By this time Kean's method had greatly improved. As the old critic had said, "he wanted keeping." His wife and he can scarcely be said to have "starred" at the Haymarket, though they were the chief members of a very strong company.

Charles Kean was the first of the great actors to travel far afield in pursuit of his profession. He played in practically every part of the world that England had painted red, toured in America more than once, and even acted in Amsterdam. He was a man of high character, a true friend, and in many ways the very opposite of his brilliant father, the sad warning of whose misspent life he had taken well to heart.

Charles Mathews had not long been made bankrupt when Webster engaged him and Madame Vestris at the Haymarket. His speculation at Covent Garden had been as unfortunate as it was bold, and his creditors had an unpleasantly tight grip upon him. Still misfortune does not seem to have affected his acting, for he had not played two seasons under Webster before he made one of the greatest successes of his brilliant theatrical career as Sir Charles Coldstream in "Used Up."

Webster had failed to please the public with Mrs. Gore's prize comedy "Quid pro Quo," from playing in which both Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mathews had prudently begged to be excused.

Sir Charles Coldstream, as played by Charles Mathews, must have been one of the most perfect pictures of the heavy, lackadaisical English dandy



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that our stage had ever seen. So much did Mathews identify himself with the part that he ended by claiming the play as his own property—a claim to which Mr. Webster objected. The lawyers were nearly called in, but on Webster, to give weight to his objection, essaying the part himself, he found himself so unfitted for it that he went no further in the matter.

Mathews left Webster in 1844, and did not return to the Haymarket until Buckstone took over the management. His next appearance and last, so far as this theatre was concerned, was in 1858, when he and his second wife opened in "London Assurance."

Charles Mathews, himself an extraordinarily quick study, and an actor who scarcely ever forgot a part, was intolerant of the needs of those whose memories were poor. At one time, after he had been absent from the theatre for close upon two years, "The Game of Speculation" was put up for performance. The company asked for the parts.

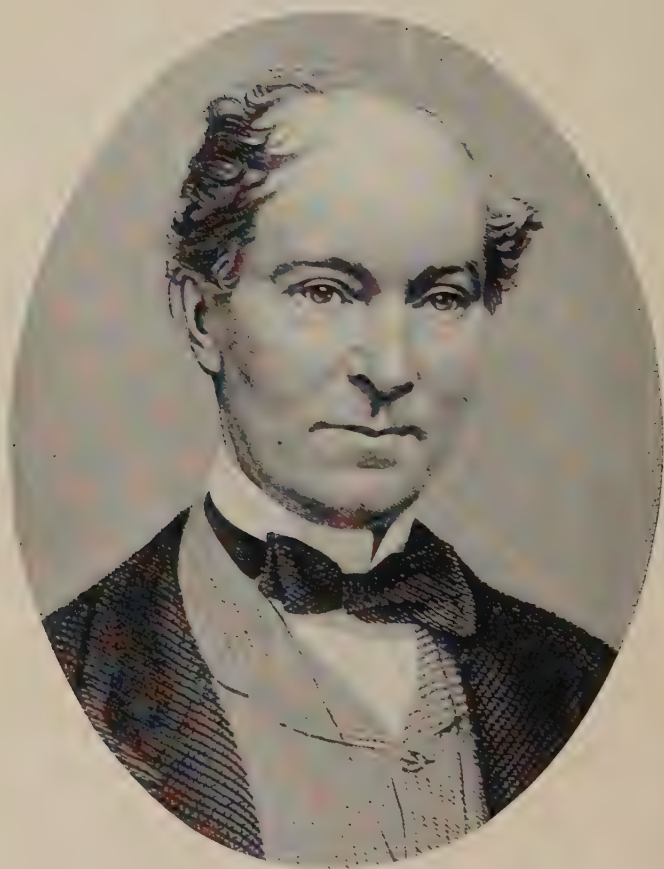
"Parts!" exclaimed Mathews in intense surprise. "Parts! Surely you can't want parts? Why, you played in it the last time I was here!"

On another occasion, during Sothern's engagement, Mathews came into the green-room where a notice was put up to the effect that "no lady or gentleman must ask permission to be absent from rehearsals during Mr. Sothern's engagement."

"Were it my engagement," said Mathews, "I would have a notice put up to the effect that no lady or gentleman must ask permission for a rehearsal at all while I am in the theatre!"

The old man in Mathews's companies always had an extremely bad time of it. When on tour the





CHARLES MATHEWS THE YOUNGER

PLATE VII

## THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

stage manager would often come up to Mathews with much hesitation and a very long face.

"I'm very sorry," he would falter. "I know," Mathews would interrupt; "you mean that your old man has run away."

Rogers was Mathews's old man at the Haymarket. When the great comedian left the theatre he shook hands heartily with him and wished him good-bye and God-speed.

"Good-bye, Mr. Mathews," returned the still sensitive Rogers, "and to quote from 'Rob Roy,' the best wish McGregor can give his friend is that he may never see him any more."

One night when Charles Mathews and his wife were "stars" at the Haymarket the curtain came down to the faintest of faint applause. But Mrs. Mathews was determined to take the call despite the chilling welcome, and turned to Mr. Braid, who was acting with her, begging him to lead her on. But he refused on the ground that the applause was insufficient.

"Mrs. Mathews," he said, "I was at Drury Lane Theatre the other night, and at the end of the third act Mr. Phelps received such a call as to his honour he refused. But, parcelled out, it would last the stars of the Haymarket Theatre twelve months!"

Those who can still remember the younger Mathews describe him as a genial, kindly soul who always put the best face upon things even when his troubles were at their worst. He would often joke about his misfortunes, and seldom gave way to melancholy, though he was sometimes in so tight a fix that the fellow-members of his company had to "spy out the land" at the back and front of the Haymarket to see if any suspicious-looking characters were loitering about

## THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

before he could go home. One night he invited the members of the Haymarket company to dinner at his house at Fulham.

“Eat, drink, and be merry,” he said with a laugh as they sat down to dinner. “You’re not sitting down on any tradesman’s body. It’s all paid for!”







JOHN BALDWIN BUCKSTONE AS "ACRES"

PLATE VIII

## CHAPTER X

MR. JOHN BALDWIN BUCKSTONE, the "Bucky" of his intimates, whose management of the Haymarket Theatre is, perhaps, the most famous of them all, was born on the 18th of September 1802, and began the first part of his early career in a solicitor's office. He was by no means averse to the study of the law, and his love for it would in all probability have continued had it not been for his discovery of some old plays on a shelf in his employer's office, which he devoured with such eagerness that it was not long before he made an attempt at the drama on his own account. It is said that by the time he had reached the age of seventeen he had written no less than two tragedies and one comedy; at any rate, there was no doubt that he had caught stage-fever badly. His first appearance was at the Peckham Theatre, his second at the Union Theatre in Catherine Street, where he played Iago to Richard Young's Othello; but it was not long before he discovered comedy to be his *forte*. Tired of amateur performances, and having had more than one quarrel with his relatives owing to the irregularity with which he pursued his profession, he took the opportunity of their being at chapel one Sunday morning to make a bolt of it. As a strolling player he learned the bitter lesson of stage experience, and his vicissitudes were distinctly damping to the dramatic ardour with which he had been fired at the

## THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

start; but an engagement being offered to him at the Surrey Theatre, he decided to stick to the boards, and made his first London appearance and success as Peter Smirk in a comedietta called "The Armistice." From the Surrey he went to the Coburg, and thence to Sadler's Wells, the Adelphi, Drury Lane, and the Haymarket, with which he was afterwards to become so very closely identified.

Buckstone's connection with the Haymarket began in 1837, when he was engaged by Webster as one of his leading comedians, and from that day until the year 1877—with one or two short intervals—his career was bound up with the theatre. Needless to say, it would be impossible to tell at full length the whole story of Buckstone's management, let alone his connection with the Haymarket Theatre. To many still living it seems only the other day that "Bucky" was at the head of affairs, the leading spirit of a theatre to which he brought added fame and glory; in which he produced a succession of brilliant plays, and for which he engaged what was literally a firmament of stars. Indeed, were it not that from the outset of this book I have determined to make none but a random attempt at telling the Haymarket story, I should have been appalled by the list of names with which "Bucky's" management confronted me. Let me, however, make my apologies to those great actors and actresses who played under the Buckstone management for the utter inadequacy of these Buckstone records. My one hope is that a story here and there may be found new; my excuse for sins of omission the genuine one—lack of space. A volume, and a capital volume too, might well be devoted to the days when "Bucky" reigned at the Haymarket.

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"Bucky," as all those who are interested in such matters know, took over the Haymarket Theatre at the close of Webster's management, that excellent actor having turned his attentions to what was then the new Adelphi. It was at Mrs. Morris's, the proprietress, own suggestion that Buckstone turned his thoughts towards management. He was eager to have a theatre of his own, but, like many another, lack of sufficient money barred the way to the realisation of his hopes.

"Mrs. Morris wants me to take the theatre," he said one day to his friend Sam Geness, upon whom he was making a call, "but I don't see how I can, I haven't got the capital."

"Take the theatre," promptly replied Geness, "and I'll find the capital." And that was how Buckstone became manager of the Theatre Royal Haymarket.

His capital acquired, Buckstone went off to arrange terms with Mrs. Morris. They soon came to an agreement, and having talked over the question of repairs, &c., Buckstone rose to take his leave.

"Good-bye, Mr. Buckstone," said Mrs. Morris; "good-bye. There's nothing more I can do for you, is there?"

"No," laughed Buckstone, "except to knock the odd £500 a year off the rent."

"With pleasure," replied Mrs. Morris, to Buckstone's intense surprise and delight.

Buckstone, I have been told, was particularly fond of telling this story of how he got his rent reduced.

Buckstone's first season lasted for over five years, and is, I believe, the longest on record. But they worked hard indeed in those days, for when the theatre closed on the Saturday the company nearly always opened at Manchester the following Monday, and at



## THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

the close of the tour, which ended on a Saturday at Birmingham, they were always back at work at the Haymarket on the Monday after. The first years of Buckstone's régime were remarkable for the famous troupe of Spanish dancers headed by Pera Nena, whom he introduced, and the appearance of Miss Amy Sedgwick, who made a big hit in Tom Taylor's "Unequal Match." One night Miss Sedgwick complained of feeling unwell, and told "Bucky" at the end of the performance that she would be unable to play the next night, apologising for having to force the manager to alter the bill.

"But I shan't," said "Bucky."

"But how on earth can you play 'The Lady of Lyons' without a Pauline?" asked the somewhat nettled Miss Sedgwick.

"I don't mean to," replied "Bucky"; "I've got two or three young ladies who are dying to play Pauline, and they'd be very good too, I think."

It is on record that on the following night Miss Amy Sedgwick duly made her appearance. All traces of illness had vanished as if by magic.

Miss Sedgwick, by the way, was at one time the fiancée of a young actor whom she was very anxious for "Bucky" to engage for a leading part in a new play.

"Impossible," said "Bucky"; "the critics say he's atrocious."

"Oh, do they?" replied Miss Sedgwick; "then I won't marry him."

And she didn't.

The story of Buckstone's firmness with Miss Sedgwick must not lead the reader to suppose that he was a stern manager. On the contrary, he was geniality and good-nature itself.

Mr. Weathersby, who played with him for years





BUCKSTONE

HOWE

CLARK

CHIPPENDALE

KENDAL

A POSTCARD DRAWN BY MR. KENDAL AND SENT TO "LITTLE CLARK"

PLATE IX

## THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

and years, has told me that he looks back upon the happy time at the Haymarket as one perpetual holiday. No one, Mr. Weathersby has often said to me, could have been kinder than "Bucky," and the company was more like a big happy family than anything else. A great feature of the life behind the scenes was the Court, which so far as I can find was a sort of continuation of Coleman's "Property Club." At any rate, Club would probably be its best designation, and a very jolly club it must have been. At it, mock trials were held, the sentences taking the shape of fines of bottles of whisky and brandy, and sometimes, for very gross offences, of dinners. Guests were invited to the Court, and many a famous personage of the time took part in its good-natured fun. When it actually originated I have been unable to discover, but it started long before Buckstone came into management, and only ended, I believe, with his retirement. Buckstone was the Lord Chief, a position which did not prevent his being sentenced and fined on more than one occasion. As a matter of fact, I believe that not a single prisoner was ever brought before that Court who was not found guilty—a method of jurisdiction which had one advantage at any rate, in that it kept the club continually supplied with liquid refreshment.

The sins for which the members of the Court stood their trial were many and varied. Here is a specimen :

One night Compton had to play in the first farce and the last, but not in the comedy, which was the *pièce de résistance*; so having done the first part of his night's work he bethought himself of a comfortable neighbouring tavern, and sallied out to have a smoke. The comedy over, and the time having arrived for the last farce, "Shocking Events," to

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begin, it was suddenly discovered that Compton was not in the theatre, but, as he had dressed for the farce before going out, it was decided to go on with the piece. They began, but when it was time for Compton to appear it was found that he was still absent, and some one had to go on and announce that the curtain would have to fall as Mr. Compton was not in the theatre. No sooner, however, had they got the curtain down than Compton returned and the piece was finished. It appeared afterwards that he had been in the café next door but one to the theatre, where the call-boy had eventually discovered him having a quiet chat with Buckstone. It had never entered his head that the mere fact of Buckstone being there showed that the comedy was not over.

Compton was tried, promptly found guilty, and fined two bottles of whisky. The next night the Lord Chief Justice Buckstone was brought before the Court, tried as an accessory for keeping one of his actors talking when he ought to have been on the stage, and fined one bottle of the wine of Scotland.

On one occasion, when Compton was cast for one of the chief characters in Bayley Bernard's "Evil Genius"—an old postman—he went down in the morning to Epsom, it being Derby Day. On the course he met Mark Lemon and some other literary friends, with whom he made so merry that he ended by missing his train back to town.

Compton was not wanted until the end of the first act, so that it was not till then that his absence was noticed. When it was, a hurried consultation was held behind the scenes, and Buckstone decided that somehow or other he would finish the act, which he succeeded in doing. But at the end of the act there



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was still no Compton; so Mr. Weathersby, who was playing a servant, suggested that he should take the letters on the stage, and by saying, "Old Jones told me this, that, and the other," fill up the gap caused by Compton's absence. This idea was agreed upon and the piece was got through without any one going on for Compton's part, though it must have sadly puzzled an old gentleman in the stalls who had possessed himself of a book of the play. When Compton at last put in an appearance at the stage-door he asked the doorkeeper how they got on without him.

"Oh, all right," was the reply.

"But what did you play?"

"The 'Evil Genius.'"

"Who played my part?"

"No one."

"Was there any apology to the audience?"

"No."

"How d—d humiliating!"

Another night when Compton was in the last piece on the programme he forgot all about it and went home to bed. Scarcely had he got settled between the sheets than he was aroused by a frantic call-boy sent to summon him to the theatre. Luckily his rooms were at 16 Charing Cross, quite close to the theatre, so that he was able to get back and go on the stage in time to take his cue. He appeared, however, in his street clothes, and of course without any make-up.

Compton, by the way, had a dresser who had inconvenient knee-caps which were invariably put out on first nights and other important occasions. As a result Compton was "put out" into the bargain.

On the first night of Planché's "Anthony and

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Cleopatra" Compton was "put out" in another way. He had to wear very long earrings, one of which got entangled in some way in his beard, which it pulled all askew. The audience screamed with delight.

"I've been d—d funny to-night," Compton remarked as he came off the stage.

Compton, though an actor, had all the appearance of a Dissenting minister. So strong was the resemblance that one night when he was invited to a dinner at which several clergymen were present a bishop got up, turned to him, and asked if "our brother" would be good enough to say grace.

Compton was much confused, but could find no excuse for not complying.

"O Lord," he said in his most solemn tones—"O Lord, open Thou our lips that our mouths may show forth Thy praise."

This reminds me of the story of a famous general who was talking to the colonel of a certain body of Colonials in the late war.

"Your men are indeed a fine brave set of fellows," said the general; "but I wish that they could be induced to abandon that vile habit of using bad language."

"Oh Hell," was the colonel's reply, as he turned away much bored.

But I must return to Buckstone.

During the whole time that "Bucky" was manager of the Haymarket Theatre he never gave one single free admission to the stalls, though if business were slack his friends were welcome to the other parts of the house. But for the stalls there was absolutely no free list at any time. Even Sothern, when at the height of his success, had to pay for a stall for a friend, and the other actors had to buy theirs too.

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"Bucky" had a poor opinion of the critics. "What do they know about it?" he would say with a shrug of his shoulders if any one referred to a notice. The stalls were barred to those gentlemen as well, though they were made free of the other parts of the house.

When business was bad every actor member of the company was accorded the privilege of writing a limited number of admissions, and some of the smaller salaried members used to have what were called "ticket nights"—in other words, they were given a certain number of tickets to sell, and received half the amount of whatever tickets they disposed of. One of the members of the company managed to secure no less than four ticket nights to himself and three for his wife and his two children, who were also connected with the theatre in some sort of way. One night this good gentleman went over to the Waterloo Tavern opposite the theatre to get a drink. He was carrying a favourite poodle in his arms. The manager, so soon as he approached the theatre, became greatly excited:

"Take that dog away at once," he shouted; "take him away, I won't have him here."

"Why, what's the matter?" said the actor with much surprise; "he won't bite."

"Perhaps not," replied the landlord, "but he might take a benefit!"

It was in 1861 that Edwin Booth first made his bow to a London audience at the Haymarket Theatre. His first part was that of Sir Charles Overreach, but he afterwards played Shylock, Richelieu, and Richard the Third.

As a matter of fact he brought no particular grist to Buckstone's mill.

Buckstone's production of Richard III., by the

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way, must have been ludicrous in the extreme. Having no armour in the Haymarket wardrobe he borrowed some from Mr. Batty of Astley's Theatre. When the armour arrived at the Haymarket it was found to be in an extremely dirty condition, and it took two property men a fortnight to polish it up and get it into anything like decent order. Everything went well with the play until the fifth act, in which the armour is worn. In this Mr. Howe had to exclaim, raising his right arm :

“ Thus far do we march——”

He delivered the lines with much emphasis, but on endeavouring to lower his arm, found that the armour had stuck, and that nothing would move it, so that he had to play the rest of the scene with his arm and sword held high in the air. The rest of the characters also suffered from Mr. Batty's armour. One of them walked for all the world as if he had a stiff leg, and the visor of another slipped down and caught his ear in such a manner that he had to play with his head all on one side. He endeavoured to put it right by rubbing his head against one of the side wings, but without any good result ! Altogether, the exhibition was about as ludicrous as any ever seen on the stage. One of the supers was highly indignant.

“ If this armour dodge goes on much longer,” he declared, “ I shall retire from the profession.”

The performances at the Haymarket Theatre under Buckstone's régime were nearly always of abnormal length. The curtain generally rose at seven o'clock, and seldom fell till well after midnight, indeed often not until one o'clock. At nine o'clock people were admitted for half-price, so that those who arrived at that hour had a very good entertainment offered



JOHN BALDWIN BUCKSTONE AS "TONY LUMPKIN"

PLATE X





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them at an exceedingly low charge. Many were the celebrities who availed themselves of this half-price system to snatch an hour or two's relaxation from the cares of office or the din of political strife. Mr. Gladstone was a very frequent attender, and the second Duke of Wellington often sat near him in the upper boxes. "Bucky" eventually abolished the half-price system, which has now, I believe, vanished from nearly all the theatres in the country.

"Bucky" was perpetually being pestered for "paper." One afternoon a man came up to him, claimed his acquaintance, and begged the favour of a couple of seats. Business being bad "Bucky" readily gave them, scribbling the admission on a card.

"By the way," remarked the stranger after thanking him, "we haven't seen any of your plays lately, Mr. Buckstone. Let us hope that you are writing a new piece."

"Not I," replied Buckstone; "I'm too busy writing orders."

Another adventure of "Bucky's" with a stranger was also funny. "Bucky" was crossing the Haymarket late one night when he noticed a man in a very evident state of intoxication vainly endeavouring to embrace one of the pillars which support the portico of the theatre.

"How dare you, sir!" exclaimed "Bucky," going up to him—"how dare you defile this temple of classic comedy! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Go home, sir; go home at once."

The bibulous stranger turned a lack-lustre eye on his adviser and steadied himself with some difficulty against a pillar.

"Go home yourself," he hiccupped, "you d—d bad imitation of Buckstone!"

## CHAPTER XI

"BUCKY" was a particular favourite with her late Majesty, Queen Victoria, and though, as all the world knows, the Queen never honoured the theatre with her presence after the death of the Prince Consort, she retained her box at the Haymarket Theatre so long as Mr. Buckstone held the reins of management. It is on record that her Majesty went to the Haymarket no less than five times to see "Bucky's" performance of Mr. Golightly in Madison Morton's "Lend Me Five Shillings," and the late Lord Alfred Paget once told a theatrical friend that the late Queen Victoria would frequently regale Prince Albert with an excellent imitation of the great comedian in that particular character.

In the days of her late Majesty's visits to the Haymarket Theatre far more ceremony was observed in the reception of Royalty than is the custom in this year of grace. The Royal entrance in those days was through the door of Buckstone's London house, adjoining the back of the theatre in Suffolk Street. A passage led to another door opening on to the anteroom of the Royal Box. At the street door waited the manager, bearing in either hand a massive silver candlestick with which to light the Royal party to their box, conducting them with much ceremony through the passage until the door of the anteroom was reached. One windy night "Bucky" was seated

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in his office awaiting the arrival of the Royal party, with the two as yet unlighted candles on a table by his side. Suddenly there came the loud double knock that usually heralded the advent of her late Majesty. It took but a second to light the two candles, and picking them up "Bucky" took his stand at the Royal entrance. The door was opened with a flourish—only to reveal the portly presence of the laundress bearing a large basket containing the week's washing! The good lady was hurriedly bidden to take her burden to the stage door, and "Bucky" once more resumed his seat. Presently there came the sound of wheels and another loud impetuous double knock. Bucky again took up his position, the door was thrown open, and her Majesty stood upon the threshold. At the same moment a gust of wind extinguished the candles, which so flustered Mr. Buckstone that he ejaculated:

"There, just look at that now!"

The Queen, laughing heartily, was conducted to her box by the much-embarrassed manager bearing the candles, whose only effect was to leave a trail of white and extremely odoriferous smoke behind them.

At the close of the performance, when her Majesty was leaving the theatre, "Bucky" had to be again on duty to conduct her back to her carriage. As may be imagined, the actor often had a great rush to wash his make-up off and change into his dress clothes in time to act as her Majesty's escort. One night when the late Queen Victoria and the late Empress Frederick (she was then of course the Princess Royal) stayed until the end in order to see "Bucky" in "Lend Me Five Shillings," it was all the actor could do to change his things and make himself presentable in time to

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conduct her Majesty to her carriage. In his hurry the soap got into his eyes, and made them water to such an extent that he had to enter the Royal presence with an handkerchief pressed against his smarting eyes. The Queen stopped a moment to congratulate the manager on the excellence of his performance. "Bucky," who was rather deaf, entirely mistaking her Majesty's remark, replied :

"No, it's soap, your Majesty ; soap !"

The last that "Bucky" saw of the Royal party that night was the Princess Royal with her face pressed close to the window of the carriage, laughingly holding her handkerchief to one of her eyes as she waved the manager a farewell.

Upon "Bucky's" deafness hangs many a good story. On one occasion the Queen commanded him to play at Windsor Castle. He duly arrived some time before the hour of the performance, and having seen that all the evening's arrangements were complete, went for a stroll in the grounds. The immediate vicinity of Windsor Castle, as most of the world knows, is extremely pretty, and "Bucky," who was a great lover of nature in all its forms, became absorbed in the study of the many plants and flowers. So absorbed indeed did he become that he entirely forgot the time until reminded by the Lord Chamberlain, who rushed breathlessly up to him.

"Mr. Buckstone," panted the court official, "you're very late. Do you know that they've played the overture three times ?"

"Dear me, dear me," exclaimed "Bucky" much perturbed, "I thought it was an organ playing in the grounds."

One night when the late Queen Victoria had commanded her box, "Bucky" stood at the door with a



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candlestick in either hand to usher in the Royal party, which included the late Prince Consort, among other members of the Royal Family. It so happened that "Bucky" was a little "off colour" that night, and quite forgetting the two steps at the end of the passages fell head over heels, candlestick and all, exclaiming in tones of great distress :

"Oh Lord, ma'am, just look at that!"

Luckily "Bucky" did himself no serious damage, but the performance had to be postponed at least five minutes to allow the Queen and the Prince Consort to have their laugh out.

"Bucky's" deafness, by the way, was not so great that he could not hear his fellow-actors while on the stage, but he had considerable difficulty in hearing his cues while standing at the wings, and in consequence made an arrangement with the prompter by which that gentleman was to warn him with a tap on the shoulder when the exact moment had arrived for him to make his entrance. The late Lord Alfred Paget was one of "Bucky's" oldest admirers and friends, and would often go round between the acts to have a chat with the comedian in his dressing-room.

One night when Lord Alfred was in front he went round as usual between the acts to have a talk with the manager. Failing to find him in his dressing-room he went behind the scenes and discovered "Bucky" sitting at the wings awaiting the prompter's warning to go on at the end of a love-scene between Sothern and the leading lady. Lord Alfred crept up behind him, and, thinking to take him by surprise, tapped him on the shoulder. "Bucky," mistaking Lord Alfred's tap for the prompter's signal, jumped up, and walked on the stage, to the amazement and confusion of Sothern and the leading lady, who stared at him in

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much embarrassment, being quite at a loss as to how to proceed.

Buckstone, however, grasped the situation in a second, and winking hard at the lady, exclaimed with a chuckle as he made a rapid exit :

“Aha, I saw you !”

A roar of laughter followed the actor's exit, and the stage lovers had to finish their scene in the best way they could.

Another night some one else came to see Buckstone, and this time, too, found him at the wings and greeted him with a tap on the shoulder. “Bucky” again mistook the tap for the prompter's warning and went on straight away. “The sailors are here,” he said, and then stopped dead at the sight of Sothern's scowling face. Grasping the situation he promptly went off again, exclaiming :

“At least I thought they were ; I'll go and see !”

“Bucky's” deafness increased with age, and when the management of the theatre came into the hands of Sothern and J. S. Clarke, the American comedian, he was very hard of hearing indeed. Charles Warner was a member of the company at the time, and had a scene with Buckstone in the “Overland Route.” Thinking to please him, and make his cues heard, Warner began in a ridiculously loud voice, and getting quite close to “Bucky's” ear, spoke his words as through an ear-trumpet, which must have had a most absurd effect and been especially annoying to Buckstone. At the end of the act “Bucky” sent for Warner and said :

“I say, young man, for God's sake don't shout in my ear like a roaring bull ! I may be deaf, but I don't want you to go on the housetop and tell all the world about it. I have played the part a few hundred times : you haven't. It doesn't matter what you say,



JOHN BALDWIN BUCKSTONE AS  
"SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK"

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I shall go on with my part ; and, please, remember I am not deaf on the stage ! ”

Charles Warner, by the way, must have been a larky young fellow in the old Haymarket days. At one time, when the company were playing Buckstone's "Married Life," he was cast for Lynx, and when the curtain rose and discovered the actors seated round the table at dessert Warner was at the side of the table passing the dishes. In those days the prompter had a little box in front of the stage, as they still have in French theatres. The prompter was sitting with his chin on a line with the stage facing Warner. An uncontrollable impulse of devilment seized the actor. Picking up an orange, with his hand under the table, he aimed straight at the prompter's head and hit him bang in the eye. The audience must have been somewhat astonished to hear a mysterious voice cry out "Damme, I'm blinded ! " The effect was ludicrous in the extreme, for the actors roared with laughter and could scarcely finish the scene. Warner was severely reprimanded and threatened with dismissal.

Sothorn was fond of playing practical jokes. When Buckstone's deafness became so acute that he could only tell when another actor had stopped speaking by his lips ceasing to move, the famous Lord Dundreary often used to keep on moving his lips without saying a word. The result was that "Bucky," thinking that Sothorn was still talking, remained silent as well.

Sothorn's success as Lord Dundreary in "The American Cousin " was one of the most remarkable in the annals of all the theatres. Success indeed is scarcely the word for it, it was a *furor*, and Buckstone must have made a small fortune at the time, though money was seldom of much use to him, for he never had a penny to bless himself with, though where all



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his money went to puzzled not a few. When Sothern was first engaged at the Haymarket he was paid by a share of the profits, but as "An American Cousin" was practically a failure at first the actor was not best pleased with the arrangement, and asked Buckstone to give him a fixed salary instead, to which the manager agreed. A little later, however, Sothern was very sorry he had asked for any alteration in the arrangement, for the house was literally packed every night. He went to Buckstone and asked him to change back to the sharing agreement.

"No, no," replied "Bucky"; "when we were doing bad business you wanted a fixed salary, and now that we're filling the house you want a share. I don't see why I should do it."

Sothern was not best pleased, but his ruffled feelings were soothed at the end of the year by a present from Buckstone of £1000.

Buckstone, by the way, however badly things might be going with him, always paid up on treasury day. One of his younger actors, who had had considerable experience of bogus managers elsewhere, and had got into the habit of regarding his chances of a weekly wage as being highly speculative, was much astonished on coming to the Haymarket to find his salary paid regularly every week.

"I don't like this theatre," he said one night in the green-room. "I shall leave it; there's no excitement about it!"

Talking of the old green-room reminds me that Buckstone made it a fixed rule that no one should go into it unless in evening dress or stage costume. He would never even enter it himself in ordinary clothes. The rule was strictly observed.

"Bucky" had a little bit of the dandy about him.

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One day, when he was playing Chrysos, he sent his wig to be dressed, and at the same time ordered a moustache for a part in a new one-act play which he was producing. The day following the order the wig was returned, and Clarkson came to the theatre to see if all was right.

To the perruquier's astonishment he was met with a torrent of abuse for not having sent the moustache, though "Bucky" admitted that he was pleased with the improvement in the wig.

Clarkson had pinned the moustache to the bald part of the wig.

No one was fonder of his "little joke," on or off the stage, than Buckstone. When playing Mr. Golightly in "Lend Me Five Shillings" he had to order a supper, which consisted for the most part of kidneys. One night when the late Queen Victoria was present Buckstone ordered the supper as usual and made his exit. On his return he found that Rogers, who was playing the old man's part as usual, had picked up the plate and was smelling the contents. Buckstone walked up to him and flicked him on the nose, exclaiming:

"How dare you, sir? How dare you smell my kidneys?"

I have it on the authority of Mr. William Farren that the whole audience laughed consumedly.

"Lend Me Five Shillings" concluded by Buckstone appealing to the audience to lend him five shillings. That same night he approached the Royal Box begging a loan. Her late Majesty's fancy was immensely tickled, though whether she complied with the request deponent sayeth not!

Old Rogers, by the way, who was a member of the Haymarket company for so many years, and was

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invariably cast for the old man, was extremely fond of gardening, a taste which he shared with the late Mr. Howe. Rogers had a peculiar "up and down" sort of voice. One day some one met him and inquired after his health.

"Thank you," replied Rogers, "my heart's all right, and my liver's all right, but my early peas are very backward."

In response to a request for any interesting anecdotes that he might have of the Haymarket Theatre, my friend Mr. Edward Rose has sent me the following, which, as it deals with the Buckstone management, has its proper place here:—

"My theatrical recollections very nearly begin at the Haymarket, and it has been my good fortune to be connected with the famous old theatre as playgoer, play-actor, and play-writer, so that it is the more discreditable that my recollections of it worthy of preservation are so very few. Their scantiness comes partly, perhaps, from a curious horror of looking back at the past. I, at least, shall never publish any volume of reminiscences, much though I enjoy other people's autobiographies.

"I started playgoing with a brace of pantomimes, which number I claimed as my proper perquisite for several years after. One was 'John Gilpin' at the Adelphi, of which I recollect nothing at all except that the harlequinade—then a very important part of the evening's entertainment—was kept in the bill after the run of the pantomime itself was over, and that I begged hard, but fruitlessly, to be allowed to see it again.

"The Haymarket pantomime was 'Undine.' Almost every theatre in those days had its pantomime at Christmas as a matter of course, with the regular

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comedians of the company taking part in the 'opening,' which was a fairy story in verse, carefully written and acted; and one result of this multiplicity of pantomimes was that their authors were of necessity not tied down to the four or five themes that nowadays do duty till they are threadbare.

"I saw 'Undine' as a matter of course from the pit—the wonderful Haymarket pit, which gave you the best seats in London for three shillings: better than the stalls, whose three or four rows were too near the stage and the distressing orchestra of those times. Thackeray always went to the pit, always was entirely happy, and always stayed to the end. I have never forgotten a story his old friend Edward FitzGerald told me of a visit either to the Haymarket or the Olympic, when, towards the end of a wretched burlesque, FitzGerald began to feel bored, and was about to propose that they should go. But at that moment Thackeray stretched out his huge arms and said, 'My God, how I am enjoying myself!' (Note that according to FitzGerald, Thackeray's exclamations generally began with 'My God.')

"In spite of, perhaps partly because of, this undue cheapness of the pit the Haymarket in the latter years of Buckstone went through one or more of those periods of depression from which no theatre escapes. And the main reason of this was, in all probability, the age of the manager—not so much because it affected his own acting, but because it was reflected in the corresponding age of a great part of his company. The two really successful periods of his later days were those in which Sothorn gave his youth and vigour to David Garrick and Dundreary, and Mr. and Mrs. Kendal made their early fame in Mr. Gilbert's fairy plays.

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“Not that the actresses at the Haymarket were, as a rule, too old or too unattractive; but for a time the men, taken as a body, were singularly solid and singularly stodgy. This danger, at least, the modern system of practically changing the company for each play avoids; but I am speaking of the time when the late Henry Howe played his one engagement at the Haymarket, which lasted forty years. There is only one way in which one can realise what a play looked like when it was acted by Buckstone, Compton, Chippendale, Howe, Rodgers, Braid, little Clark, Walter Gordon, and the rest; and that is to drop into the Théâtre Français on an unlucky night. That theatre is, to my thinking, the most splendid and valuable institution in the world of art; but to see ‘Misanthrope’ acted there, as I saw it about two years ago, is almost enough to make one forget Mounet Sully. Three stumpy little gentlemen of mature age, who had learned nothing and forgotten nothing—except some portions of their parts—for at least a generation stood elbow to elbow facing the footlights and solemnly and pointlessly repeated the airy lines which Molière has given to the Golden youth of the Court of Louis.

“At its worst, the Haymarket was something like this. In thirty years I have not succeeded in forgetting a performance of the earlier version of Bayard’s ‘Marie à la Campagne,’ from which Mr. Burnand’s memorable ‘Colonel’ was afterwards adapted. It was then called ‘The Serious Family,’ and fully deserved its title.

“Still there was excellent and memorable work done in ‘Pygmalion and Galatea,’ and the ‘Palace of Truth,’ and the ever delightful ‘New Men and Old Acres,’ whose heroine was played with wonderful



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cleverness and charm by Mrs. Kendal, then called Miss Madge Robertson. In the fairy plays I remember most the beginning of a reform—due no doubt to Mr. W. S. Gilbert himself—in the atrocious system of speaking verse which obtained a generation ago on the English stage, and, curiously enough, to an almost equal extent on the French. I never, of course, saw Macready, but his lieutenants who survived him, and the whole of their school, made it their object to speak verse as if it were prose by way of being natural. And crossing the Channel it was odd to hear men like Got and Vaubant, of the *Comédie Française*, falling into precisely the errors of the Ryders and Sullivans here. One could not but think how much trouble it would have saved the poet if he had only been told that the first care of the interpreters would be to turn the skilful rhythm into clumsy prose. But with a stage-manager who knew himself how to ‘sing and build the lofty rhyme’ a change began. I shall never forget the delight of hearing, quite thirty years ago, Miss Caroline Hill’s natural and right reading of her graceful lines in ‘The Palace of Truth.’

“Leaving the recollections of a play-goer for those of a play-actor, I fear the only thing which stays to me that could by any possibility interest other people is an infinitesimal reminiscence of the hundred nights during which I played the ‘gravedigger’ in *Hamlet*, when the Haymarket was under the management of my old friend Mr. Tree. He and I had been first and second gravediggers in an amateur massacre of the tragedy more than twenty years ago, when, by the way, I went on at an hour’s notice because the amateur cast for the part, who had not attended a single rehearsal, sent a telegram during the evening to say that he was unfortunately unable to appear.

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“ This, however, is not my little reminiscence, which is a tiny criticism showing Mr. Tree’s curious quickness and, so to speak, neatness of mind. I told our admirable Ophelia that I had thought out a new reading in my part. It had always, I take it, been supposed that the words, ‘ Good man delver ’—addressed to his companion, meant simply ‘ Good man digger ’—as who should say ‘ My dear doctor ’ or the like. But I maintained that a more plausible reading was with an added capital—‘ Goodman Delver ’—since Shakespeare probably named his character after the character’s profession, and so called the gravedigger ‘ Mr. Delver,’ as he called a serving-man Potpan and a musician Soundpost or Roebeck (as the scene-painter in a modern pantomime still puts down his chemist as Mr. Pill).

“ ‘ Very ingenious,’ said Mr. Tree, ‘ but isn’t yours a new writing rather than a new reading ? ’ ”

Apropos of Mr. Edward Rose’s remarks, everyone may not remember that the late Henry Howe was a Quaker. One day an uncle of his came to see him, but as Howe had a rehearsal to attend he had to leave his relative to look after himself until dinner-time. Dinner over, Howe had again to excuse himself, having to play in the evening performance.

“ What, Henry ! ” exclaimed the astonished uncle, “ dost make a fool of thyself twice a day ? ”

By the way, when Buckstone produced his first pantomime, “ The Three Bears,” at the Haymarket he was at a loss to find a little girl with natural fair hair to play the part of Silverhair. Harry Marshall, the clown, suggested that “ Lyd over the way ” was a very capable young person and had the necessary physical qualification. “ Lyd ” was the famous Miss Lydia Thompson. But I must let Miss Thompson tell

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the story of her engagement herself, just as she has told it to me.

"Harry Marshall said to me, 'Do you think you could play on the stage?' I said I didn't know, but I'd like to try. I was taken down to see Buckstone and Mrs. Fitzwilliam, and was again asked the same question, 'Would you be afraid to speak on the stage?' and again I gave the same answer, 'I don't know, but I'll try.' Mrs. Fitzwilliam said, 'Unplait your hair, dear.' It was in a pigtail. I undid it, and the hair was very satisfactory. Then 'Bucky' said, 'Pull your dress back and let us see your legs.' They also were considered very satisfactory. So I was engaged at £2 a week for the pantomime. Old Chippendale was the stage-manager. He was very strict, and many were the tears I shed. The first night I was dreadfully nervous. 'Bucky' stood in the wings and shouted 'Louder, louder.' I spoke louder, and made a big success. After the pantomime was over 'Bucky' picked me up in his arms, and kissed me, and said, 'My dear little girl, you have made my pantomime.'"

In the "Three Bears," by the way, there was a little girl dancing named Laura Morris. She was about thirteen or fourteen years old. A young man fell in love with the child, and came night after night in a box and watched her. Finally he got to know her, sent her to school for a year, and married her when she was about fifteen. She came one night the next year and sat in a box in front, covered with diamonds. Later she went into grand opera as Madame Florence Lanza!

Eight or nine years before "Bucky's" death the prosperity he had so long enjoyed at the Haymarket was abruptly checked. Age and infirmity prevented

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his bestowing all the attention to the management that he would have wished, and more than one unsuccessful play was produced. In 1877, finding he could not continue to manage the theatre save under conditions with which he found it impossible to comply, he withdrew into private life, and died two years after.

Apropos of the Chippendales, a good story is told of them when on tour. On reaching Worcester, J. C. King, the then manager, suggested that a performance of "Black-eyed Susan" would be a good idea for a benefit. There were, however, but nine members of the company and four supers, but by judiciously doubling and trebling the parts all the characters were played. The orchestra of five performers were given strict instructions regarding the music cues, but on the benefit night they played on the dances to the tune of "Hearts of Oak," and sent William to his death with a hornpipe, much to the disgust of old Chippendale, who sentenced William to death by saying :

"You must be hanged at the yardarm until you are dead—and be damned to you!"

Hendrie, by the way, tells a capital story of when he was playing in the Chippendales' company. He had just reached the important age of twenty-one, and had dined with his managers previous to the performance of "She Stoops to Conquer," in which he played Tony Lumpkin. During the piece he had to say: "Father, am I twenty-one years of age to-day?"

"Of course you are," replied Chippendale; "didn't you tell us so at dinner to-day?"

As I have already said, it is practically impossible within a limited space to deal adequately with so long and important a management as Buckstone's. Not



JOHN BALDWIN BUCKSTONE AS "SCRUB"

PLATE XII





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only did he include in his company many of the most famous actors who have passed away, but more than one living "star" also served under his banner. Chief among those was dear old John L. Toole, who made his first appearance at the Haymarket as Simmons in "The Spitalfields Weaver" at twenty to one in the morning, in 1851.

"Who's Toole?" Compton asked Webster one night at a "Court" dinner.

"Well," replied Webster, "Toole's a man I engage at £20 a week at the Adelphi, who won't engage unless he has three months for himself to go into the country, where he makes £50 a week or more."

The late Mr. Sims Reeves was another member of Buckstone's company, so was Mr. Sidney Cooper—in the capacity of scene-painter at a pound a week!—while Sir Charles Wyndham made an appearance during the Buckstone régime as an amateur in a performance of "The Serious Family," given by Mr. Coe's pupils, in which he played Captain Murphy Maguire.

I need hardly say that during the years in which Mr. Buckstone managed the Haymarket Theatre there were periods when it was sublet. Of two of those periods I would make mention here. One relates to the appearance of Madame Janauchek, another to an old and much respected friend, Mr. Clark Russell.

Madame Janauchek opened at the Haymarket, just after a most brilliant season by Miss Adelaide Neilson, in a play called "Medea." The title rôle was one in which she had made enormous successes in Germany, Austria, and Russia; indeed the gifts showered upon her by emperors and kings, in the way of jewels and orders of merit, were a sight to gaze upon. She had never before appeared in England, but her reputation as a great actress had preceded her. America had

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received her with open arms, and she was acknowledged as one of the greatest actresses that had ever crossed the boards of the American stage. Charles Warner, who acted with her in "Medea," has told me that to him her acting was a revelation. Her command of pathos and passion was greater than anything he had ever seen, or was ever likely to see again. She was called and recalled after the great act, but the critics did not appreciate her. Warner has told me how well he remembers the morning after the first performance. He was with Madame Janauchek at the theatre. She opened a London paper of standing, and after reading a few lines turned deadly pale, and would have fallen had he not been near to support her. Her season was a failure, and very short indeed. This, however, is no more inexplicable than Salvini's returning to London after his enormous success as Othello, and playing to empty benches in a West End theatre. As Janauchek left London she said, "I came to this country so full of joyful expectation: I leave it with a saddened heart. Strange that my acting has been appreciated in almost every country in Europe save London. Why, I wonder?"

Mr. Clark Russell's experience of the Haymarket Theatre I tell in his own words, copied from a letter he wrote me not long ago:

"When I was coming home from Australia as a sailor in my last voyage I came across Tom Moore's works and began to make rhymes, and in short dropped the sailor and started as a poet. I brought this imbecile ambition ashore with me, and when staying at Deal in 1865 or thereabouts, I studied Shelley and fell so passionately in love with 'The Cenci,' that I resolved to write a drama like it! Figure a sailor with his imagination charged with the inspirations

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of the biscuit-worm 'that dieth not,' and fired by experiences of stinking water and a tot of rum at noon, hoping to write a drama like 'The Cenci!'

"I went to work. I forget the plot. I suspect there was none. I wrote the thing in blank verse. It was in five acts, and I called it 'Fra Angelo.' I printed it at Deal, and returned to London and showed the masterly production to John Brougham, who advised me to send one copy to Miss Marriott, who was then at Sadler's Wells Theatre, and another copy to Walter Montgomery, who was living in Langham Street, apparently without anything to do. Miss Marriott took no more notice of me than if I had been one of the bread-worms afore-mentioned, but almost by return of post I received a letter from Walter Montgomery asking me to call upon him. I long ago lost that letter. It glowed with admiration. I was afterwards told that at the Garrick Club Montgomery was telling everybody that he had discovered a sucking Shakespeare. We met—not in a crowd, but in his rooms in Langham Street—and he told me that he would produce my play and hire the Haymarket Theatre for that purpose. The time was the height of the dog-days, but he was intrepid, and we all know that Hamlet was something mad! He gave me a cheque for seven pounds ten for the play, and being then about twenty-two years of age, I considered his treatment of me exceedingly handsome.

"The cast so far as I can remember included Walter Montgomery, Vollaire, Fitzjames, Fernandez, Raymond, Kate Rodgers, Louisa Moore, Mrs. Marston, and I have some memory of a ballet girl. Burnand's 'Ixion' ran conjointly with it.

"On the first night I occupied a box. In the next box was a white-haired old man who chatted to two

## THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

ladies all through my play. I was so incensed to think that my merits were being neglected, that I peered round and in a gruff sea-note intimated that talking was very objectionable. The white-haired old man proved to be John Oxenford, the dramatic critic of the *Times*, and, strange to relate, of the many notices that followed his proved the least depreciatory. There was the usual cry for the author when the curtain fell. I bowed from my box, but the whole applause of the house was showered upon Mr. Vollaire, who stepped forward on the stage dressed in a frockcoat and bowed like a mandarin with his hand on his heart. What the deuce he did there, I don't know. A lady gave me a magnificent bouquet to take round to Kate Rodgers. Half-way up the wooden staircase I met Ada Cavendish, dressed in very little to speak of for the burlesque. She asked me to give her the bouquet, but I pursued my upward path doggedly, knocked on Kate Rodgers's door, and handed the flowers to a lady whom I shall always remember as a very pretty woman and a very piquante actress. Her husband was box-keeper. I then went round to Walter Montgomery, whose tights were being drawn off by his dresser. He exclaimed in the surliest tone :

“ ‘ I thought it was understood between us that I was to lead you on to the stage and announce the repetition of the play.’ ”

“ I answered that I did not remember. He did not again speak to me ; he would not even look at me. I addressed one or two sentences to him, and then, disgusted and perplexed by the conduct of a man who afterwards solved the enigma of his own career by blowing out his brains, I left the room. I frequently met him afterwards at the Café de L'Europe next door, but we never spoke.



## THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

"In this café, whilst the play was running, I was one night sitting with John Brougham. A tall, military, good-looking man entered. He nodded to Brougham.

"'Been next door?' asked Brougham.

"'Yes.'

"'What do you think of the play?'

"'Utter, unmitigated rubbish,' was the reply.

"'This is the author,' said Brougham with a bland gesture and a blander smile.

"The tall, military-looking man coloured up with a fine gentlemanly air of confusion, and said smiling with difficulty at me, 'It is so very easy to criticise,' and then darting a look at Brougham which should have kept that gentleman thirsty for the remainder of the night, he walked off.

"Here in this tavern, as the so-called café should be termed, used to assemble after their several performances nearly all the chief actors of the day. Indeed the traditions of this place must always form a portion of the story of the Haymarket Theatre. Here I have seen Mr. Toole, John Ryder, John Clarke, Sothorn, Mr. Kendal, Charles Harcourt (one of the pleasantest fellows I ever met: an airy and charming Mercutio), and many others. Arthur Sullivan was often here. One night he said to me proudly: 'What do you think? I have been made musical Editor of the *Glow-worm!*'"

## CHAPTER XII

THE 31st of January 1880 saw the first appearance of the then Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft at the Haymarket Theatre. My pen is far too inadequate to express in due manner the thanks owed by actor and playgoer alike to this brilliant couple, who, though now enjoying a well-earned rest from their theatrical labours, are still untiring in the cause of doing good to others; who are the most encouraging and helpful of friends; and to whom we of the Haymarket Theatre owe a specially deep debt of gratitude, in that it was through them alone that it assumed its present attractive shape and style, while at the same time they added in no small manner to its honour and glory.

Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft's theatrical life has ever been characterised by good judgment and good taste, but when in taking over the management of the Haymarket Theatre they determined, with a determination that none could shake, to "gut" it—to use a vulgarism—and in the "gutting" to abolish its then famous pit, the wiseacres declared that they must be theatrically mad. Before Sir Squire and his wife ascended the Haymarket throne there was no better pit in all London than that of the Haymarket Theatre. Roomy it was and comfortable, while it afforded a better view of the stage than that of any other theatre. Truly it seems difficult to-day even to



*From a photograph by Russell & Sons, Baker Street, W.*

LADY BANCROFT

PLATE XIII



## THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

realise how the plucky management could have been bold enough to abolish it. But it meant either the abolition of the pit or not running the theatre, and Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft knew what they were doing when they took the Haymarket. Full well, too, did they realise that, in taking away the pit, they might look forward to no little opposition; though they never for one moment expected to raise the storm that burst upon them on their memorable "first night."

In anticipation of some trouble Sir Squire issued the following advertisement:

"As some disappointment may be felt at the abolition of the pit, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft deem it necessary to explain the alteration. With the present expense of a first-class theatre it is impossible to give up the floor of the house—its most remunerative portion—to low-priced seats, and the management, being unwilling to place any part of the audience in close and confined space under the balcony, the only alternative was to allot the frequenters of the pit the tier usually devoted to the upper boxes, and now called the second circle. In carrying out the structural alterations of the theatre Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft have, they hope, specially attended to the comfort of visitors to these seats, by raising the ceiling, building a new stone staircase, a refreshment room, and by removing all obstacles to a clear view of the stage."

But this admirably worded advertisement had unhappily but little or no effect, and the first night of the Bancroft management was one of the stormiest in the annals of theatrical history. The very elements themselves seemed against the brilliant couple. A fog, "the densest, cruellest fog that perhaps even



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London ever knew" (I quote from Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft's altogether admirable book "On and Off the Stage," to which I owe the better portion of this chapter), chose to wrap London in its cloak that night and to make access to the theatre a matter of no little difficulty, if not of danger. Still despite the efforts of nature the house was crowded. The overture was played amid silence. Then the curtain went up and the theatre was turned into a highly-coloured imitation of the lion house at the "Zoo" at feeding time. They—I refer to the cheaper portion of the house—hooted, and howled, and groaned like ten thousand demons. Screams of "Where's the pit?" were mingled with shouts that did credit to the malcontents' lungs if to no other part of the anatomy, and for full twenty minutes did Sir Squire in the character of Sir Frederick Blount in "Money" stand awaiting their pleasure. Never for a second did he lose his temper. Old and valued friend of the playgoer as he was, hard as he had tried to please his patrons, so far as lay in his power consistent with common-sense, he never "turned a hair" while they greeted him like any murderer. Lady Bancroft has graphically described the agony she went through as she watched everything through a hole in her dressing-room wall. She was just upon the point of rushing upon the stage and addressing the malcontents herself, appealing to them to listen to her for the sake of "Auld Lang Syne," when just as suddenly as it had begun the uproar ceased. The rowdy element were tired out. Twenty minutes of continuous groaning had finished them. They had exhausted their ill-temper, to show which, indeed, there had been little or no cause, and when Lady Bancroft stepped upon the stage it was to be greeted with one of the heartiest

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welcomes with which an English actress has ever met. The rest of the evening told a tale of triumph, managerial as well as artistic, for no more was heard, in the theatre at any rate, of the abolished pit.

An amusing incident, by the way, occurred on this memorable and in many ways awful night. Among those who had seats allotted to them for the first night was Mr. J. S. Clarke, whom Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft succeeded in the management. Mr. Clarke had arranged to meet his son outside the theatre, but the elements compelled a late arrival. His son, upon reaching the theatre, at once went to his father's box, but found on looking through the window in the door that it was empty. He also saw Sir Squire on the stage facing the audience, and heard what seemed to him to be one long roar of applause. After watching for a while he went back to the front of the house to await his father, but after a few minutes returned to the box to find Sir Squire still facing the audience. Backwards and forwards he went from the box to the portico of the theatre, and each time he came to the box it was to find Sir Squire still in the same position. At last his people arrived at the theatre in a cab. Rushing up to his father in great excitement he pulled him by the arm.

"Come on, come on," he cried, "or you'll miss the most wonderful ovation. Bancroft, to my certain knowledge, has been bowing to the audience for the last twenty minutes. No actor in this world ever had so magnificent a reception."

As Sir Squire dryly remarked, "When they entered their box they could hear as well as see my greeting."

The abolition of the Haymarket pit was by no means the only benefit conferred upon the theatre by Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft—but architectural details

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are seldom interesting save to the initiated, and I will spare my readers a catalogue of the improvements. It is quite sufficient to say that the theatre was transformed into one of the most perfect, and certainly the most comfortable, in the whole of London. A passage from a letter written to Sir Squire by a cultured acquaintance, which I venture to quote, gives nothing but bare facts.

“Having seen the interior of many theatres in Europe, I feel convinced that there is nothing either in design, decoration, comfort, and *tout-ensemble* to equal the Haymarket Theatre. It would be ridiculous, of course, to compare or contrast your house with those of magnitude like the Scala at Milan, but viewing it as a house of comedy, it has not in my humble judgment a rival.”

I will make no attempt here to give anything approaching a detailed account of Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft's management of the Haymarket Theatre, interesting, progressive, and eminently artistic as it was. A few incidents of that management must suffice. As a matter of fact, my chief reason for devoting such an inadequate amount of space to Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft lies in the fact that in their own book they have “covered the ground” more than thoroughly. He, therefore, who would read of the Bancroft régime must invest in a copy of “On and Off the Stage”—a good investment I'll warrant him.

Among the amusing incidents of the years 1880-1885 was the playing of the Bancroft company one night to what was probably the smallest audience to whom a curtain had risen since the Haymarket first opened its doors. To be strictly accurate for once during this book, there were exactly seven people in the stalls, and scarcely a living soul in the dress circle! The

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reason for this scanty audience was not lack of appreciation on the part of the public, but the terrible weather that January of 1881 brought with it. On one side of Regent Street every shop had perforce to close its doors, and how every member of the company managed to reach the theatre still remains little short of a mystery. Lady Bancroft very truly remarks of the audience, "How they must have loved the drama to come at all! I could not proceed for a moment," she goes on to say, "for I saw at once the comic aspect of the situation. When my gaze went to the expression of the faces of the stall occupants I could not restrain my laughter any longer. I should have much liked to have invited them to tea in the green-room, and have had no performance at all." It was during that severe winter, by the way, that poor Sothorn breathed his last.

Among the chief points of interest that succeeded this extremely frosty evening—"frosty" in more senses than one—was the début of Mrs. Langtry, who made her first theatrical bow under the generous auspices of Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft at a *matinée* given for the benefit of the Royal General Theatrical fund, at which the beautiful actress appeared as Miss Hardcastle in "She Stoops to Conquer," Mrs. Labouchere having been her coach. It was a memorable début, for seldom has a theatrical box-office been so besieged with applications for seats, and public excitement prior to the performance positively reached fever heat.

The performance, if not a *furore*, was at any rate a great success. The Prince and Princess of Wales honoured it with their presence, and £430 was handed over to the secretary of the theatrical fund as the result of the afternoon's proceedings. Another result

## THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

was the engagement for a season of Mrs. Langtry by Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, and she made her first professional appearance as Blanche Haye in "Ours," a production in which my friend Pinero also figured, as well as poor Arthur Cecil.

Apropos of Arthur Cecil, there are two good stories told of him which, I believe, will well bear repetition. One night Cecil was invited to dine with the Guards at the St. James's mess, Mr. George Nugent being his host. Cecil duly turned up at the appointed hour, but by the time dinner was announced Mr. Nugent had not arrived. Cecil, however, went in with the others, sat down, and began eating. After the fish Cecil turned to his next-door neighbour and remarked that his host was a little late.

"Who is your host?" he was asked.

"Mr. George Nugent," replied Cecil.

"Oh, but he's on guard at the bank," remarked the officer.

Up jumped Arthur Cecil full of apologies; in two minutes he was on his way to the Bank of England, where he finished his dinner in Mr. Nugent's company.

Poor Arthur Cecil was very fond of driving in London. One day he hired a victoria, which happened to be driven by an Irish coachman. Cecil told him to take him round Hyde Park. Pat said not a word, but not wishing to go to Hyde Park himself for some reason or another, drove straight to Regent's Park instead.

The next day Pat came round to Cecil's house again with the victoria.

"And where will I take you to-day, sorr?" he asked.

"Well, I really don't know," replied Cecil, "but I know where I want you to take me."



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Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft's next production was Sardou's "Odette," in which Madame Modjeska, whom my wife at one time had the honour of understudying, returned to the London stage. It was unfortunately but a moderate financial success, though its artistic triumph was undoubted. But I have, I regret, no space in which to record the various pieces with which Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft delighted audiences at the Haymarket Theatre. Sufficient must it be to say that every one of them was marked by extreme artistic care in the production and extraordinarily well selected casts. Indeed, I doubt whether any management of any theatre ever cast their plays more perfectly than this brilliant couple, whom Harrison and myself have had the honour of succeeding. Under their banner played many a famous actor. Arthur Cecil and Pinero I have mentioned: Brookfield, too, was often with them, as well as Forbes Robertson, dear old Lal Brough, Mrs. Bernard Beere, who made such a brilliant success in "Fedora," Mrs. Stirling, Miss Calhoun, and last, but not least, Mrs. John Wood.

Lal Brough, by the way, has ever been among the most conscientious of actors. When the Bancrofts produced "The Rivals" Brough was the Bob Acres. In the street scene was a stage cloth painted to represent cobble stones, with a gutter running down the centre of it. Brough, faithful to detail, conceived the notion of skipping across it. The audience, however, did not in the least understand Brough's little skip, and appeared to think that something was the matter with him, so he cut it out. Such is the value of realism in this profession of ours!

In speaking of Mrs. Langtry, I forgot to mention that I had the pleasure of playing under her manage-

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ment in the days when the idea of becoming a manager myself, and least of all at the Haymarket Theatre, never occurred to me. A very jolly management it was, that of Mrs. Langtry; and I was not long in discovering the secret of her popularity with those who worked under her, for she always had a good word for every one, even the least important members of her company.

It was in 1885 that Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, much to the distress of their innumerable admirers, made up their minds to give up the cares of management and retire into private life, but it was not until July 20th that they gave their farewell performance—one of the most remarkable, affecting farewells in the whole history of the English stage. The Prince and Princess of Wales occupied the Royal Box, Prince and Princess Christian took another, and there was such an enormous application for seats, that to say that the box-office was besieged would be to put it very mildly indeed. The difficulty of allotting seats I can well appreciate, and in order to make the seating capacity of the house as great as possible Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft wisely removed the stall and balcony armchairs and had smaller ones put in their place. Needless to say, every sort of effort was made to obtain seats by people who really had no claim to them. As much as twenty guineas was freely offered, but the management were determined that every place in the theatre should be sold at the ordinary charge or given away—a determination which was strictly carried out.

Needless to say, the rush for the unreserved parts of the house was literally tremendous. Many arrived early in the morning with camp-stools and sandwiches, and at last the numbers outside the door grew so



*From a photograph by The London Stereoscopic Co.*

SIR SQUIRE BANCROFT

PLATE XIV



## THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

great that the police had to divert the traffic and send it by other thoroughfares. The programme was a splendid one. It began with the first act of Lytton's "Money," which was followed by a scene from "London Assurance." Then came the second and third acts of "Masks and Faces," in which the Bancrofts appeared. This over, Sir Henry Irving spoke a farewell from the pen of Mr. Clement Scott, dear old Toole made a humorous affectionate speech, and the evening ended with the few farewell words of Sir Squire Bancroft.

Among those who played at this remarkable performance, besides those I have mentioned, were Hare, Wyndham, Terriss, Coghlan, Kendal, John Clayton, Forbes Robertson, Kyrle Bellew, David James, poor Blakeley, Charles Collette, Brookfield, Kemble, Ellen Terry, Mrs. Stirling, Mrs. John Wood, Mrs. Langtry, Mrs. Kendal, and Carlotta Addison, all of whom had at various times been under the Bancroft management.

All the great world and his wife were present of course, and the enthusiasm was literally overwhelming. Seldom I suppose in the annals of the stage has actor or actress had such a reception as was accorded to Sir Squire and his wife that night.

I cannot forbear quoting a passage from Sir Squire's farewell speech. It serves as no mean model :

"We feel how far beyond our merits are the honours and compliments which have been showered upon us from every side, and I am deeply conscious of my poverty of attempt to acknowledge them. Robbed now of the actor's art, I must ask you to clothe my words with all the eloquence and wealth of thanks I mean them to convey ; but I almost think the sympathy between us at this moment is beyond words. If it has been my privilege to spare Mrs. Bancroft such labours and anxieties as should not be a woman's lot,



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how amply have I been a thousand times repaid. Most of us, I think, owe Mrs. Bancroft something, but I am by far the heaviest in her debt. I alone know how she has supported me in trouble, saved me from many errors, helped me to many victories, and it is she who has given to our work those finishing touches, those last strokes of genius, which, in all art, are priceless. And so, ladies and gentlemen, we worked together until we earned, very gradually, our proud possession, the confidence of the public. Whatever that work may be worth, it has been thorough and honest, for neither of us have bought any man's favour. It would ill become me to talk of what we have tried to do, but should we be remembered as humble pioneers of anything that may have advanced the art we love, if we should be thought in some way to have helped to make its position better than we found it, it would be a high distinction.

"No general can succeed without a staff and an army. In every branch our fellow-workers—from those distinguished authors and actors, those masters of the craft whose names will spring at once to your memories, to the humblest member of our ranks—have been so loyal and so forbearing to us, that we shall feel for ever in their debt. Indeed it is but the simple truth to say that all we have earned of fame and fortune we owe to the calling we have followed, and it would be a poor return not to give it back the brightest feelings of our natures."

At the close of this address, from which I have but made an extract, the enthusiasm knew no bounds, and while the band played "Auld Lang Syne," the whole audience rose and cheered to the echo.

The Bancrofts were sent for by the Princess of Wales, who gave Mrs. Bancroft the bouquet she was

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carrying. When the heroes of the evening at last left the theatre to go to a party at Mr. Alfred de Rothschild's the crowd completely blocked the whole of Suffolk Street, and the carriage had no little difficulty in making its way through the throng. "It mustn't be good-bye," cried many a voice. "Stay with your friends!"

The floral offerings were so many in number on this memorable night that when they were sent to the Bancrofts' house the next day in a van there was not room enough for them in the house, and the balcony was filled with them. A crowd of course collected.

"'Oo lives 'ere?" asked a bystander.

"Why, it's the Bancrofts' 'ouse," said another. "They've just 'ad a 'eap of money left them by a relation, wot insists on their leaving the stage."

By the way, before I conclude this chapter I would mention that in Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft's delightful book I can find no mention of the Haymarket ghost. Yet a real ghost has been supposed to have haunted the theatre for many years. Personally, I have never seen it, but two firemen, of whom I know, declare positively that they have seen a face staring through a window. Our valued business-manager, Mr. Horace Watson, is also inclined to believe in the existence of the Haymarket ghost, for he declares that he distinctly saw the door of his office open and shut, but upon looking about could find no trace of any human being who could have done it.

## CHAPTER XIII

It was a good day for the Haymarket Theatre when Mr. Tree followed Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft and took over the reins of management. For Tree is not only, if he will allow me to say so, a fine actor, but he has also the truest love for his art, the highest respect for it, and the keenest desire to encourage and improve upon it in every possible direction. Consequently, when he embarked upon the risky career of management those who knew and understood him felt sure that the reputation of the Haymarket was in safe hands, and that, whether attended by success or failure, Tree would do nothing to destroy the character of a house whose name had risen so high in the ranks of the London theatres.

As it turned out, Tree if anything added to the good name the theatre had acquired. His productions were always artistic and of the highest order ; he surrounded himself with companies that were second to none in London, and he encouraged young and untried writers, who owe no little of their reputation to him. He has always been an enthusiast, and his enthusiasm has always been for good. Let us hope that he may be spared to the English stage for many a long year to come—to add brilliance to its acting, to give encouragement to its dramatists, and to increase the



*From a photograph by Langfier, 23A Old Bond Street, W.*

HERBERT BEERBOHM TREE

PLATE XV





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artistic beauty of its productions. People have been known to chaff Mr. Tree for his enthusiasm, but in the end he has always had the laugh of them. They may have come to scoff, they have nearly always remained to pray.

If I were asked to pick out an adjective from the dictionaries to describe Mr. Tree's management of the Haymarket Theatre, nay, indeed for his whole career, I should hesitate between "brilliant" and "plucky," and should end by choosing both of them. The brilliance no playgoer could deny; the pluck a brother manager can best appreciate. Nothing has ever deterred Mr. Tree from carving out his artistic career as he has thought best, and his presence on the pinnacle has proved how well he knows his business. He has made mistakes of course; we all must. But when the wiseacres thought he was most in error he was often most in the right.

As a producer of plays Mr. Tree stands second to none. His capacity for hard work is little short of extraordinary, and I have often wondered how he has stood the strain of his tremendous productions—productions over every detail of which he has kept watch, though his own parts in the play have been exhausting in the extreme, and have made the greatest demands upon brain and body too.

I may be excused at having spoken at some length of Tree's obvious excellencies when it is remembered that he did me the best turn any man ever did another. I refer to the day when he built his present magnificent theatre and left the Haymarket to my friend Harrison, who, by the way, was at one time his business manager and understudy, and to myself. For that deed alone I owe Tree a deeper debt of gratitude than I can ever repay. And not only did he leave us the Haymarket

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Theatre, but he left it with an enhanced reputation and an increased popularity.

So much have I admired many of Tree's productions while he managed the Haymarket Theatre that I should like to write fully of them did space allow. But under the circumstances I can but dismiss them with my humble word of praise. They probably exceeded in variety, though not in number, the productions made under any Haymarket management save perhaps Buckstone; but then Tree was at the Haymarket but a few years, while the ever-lamented "Bucky" looked after it for a quarter of a century.

Among other legacies bequeathed to me by Tree was old Oliver Wales, who had been stage-carpenter with Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, and was a great character—quite famous in a way with us people of the theatrical world. A story is told, but for its accuracy I will not vouch, of how Wales's name led to an amusing incident. The Prince of Wales, now King Edward VII., paid the Haymarket a visit one night, and, after enjoying the show, begged Mr. Tree to take him "round behind." The Prince had lit a cigar, which he smoked while Mr. Tree explained the various features behind the scenes. When they got to the back of the stage who should the manager espy but old Oliver Wales quietly enjoying a pipe in a corner. One can imagine his Royal Highness's consternation when Tree called out peremptorily :

"How dare you, Wales; stop smoking at once!"

Sir Squire Bancroft, too, had an amusing instance of this kind. He, also, was conducting the Prince round the theatre soon after the great alterations had been made. In reference to some question or other Sir Squire turned to the carpenter and asked, "Which way, Wales?" His Royal Highness was much amused.

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Old Oliver Wales was once the subject of a joke to which he never afterwards referred for reasons not far to seek. Tree was producing "The Tempter," in which, in the character of his Satanic majesty, the actor had to be lowered from the flies by means of a rope. It was Wales's business to test the rope to see that all was accurate, so one morning he duly affixed himself to it, and bade his son raise him to the flies. This young Wales did, and having got his father well up to the fly-rail, shouted at the top of his voice :

"Beer time, boys !"

At this welcome sound the whole of the stage hands left the theatre in a body, young Wales among them, leaving the unfortunate master-carpenter hanging in mid-air with no earthly chance of escape. It is on record that the stage hands took half-an-hour to consume their liquid refreshment that day, and not until the end of that time did the old gentleman return to terra firma ! It is said that his language was a thing not to be forgotten by students of our complicated native tongue.

Among his other many accomplishments Oliver Wales included the one of romance to a greater degree than I have ever encountered before or since. Though he was practically never known to leave the neighbourhood of Suffolk Street during the summer vacation, he invariably had a long list of adventures to recount at the end of the holidays. The following is typical of his yarns. I give it in what I feel sure is but a feeble imitation of his style, but I am no romancer :

"I was going along, sir, aboard the *Marguerite*. We was just off Sheerness when I sees the *Sunbeam* a-'eavin in sight, and I says to the captain of the *Marguerite* : "'Old 'ard, captin,' I says, 'ere's my old friend Brassey. I want to 'ave a word along with

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Brassey. 'E comes to the 'Aymarket, and I knew 'im well in Bancroft's time!' Well, the captin 'e 'ove-to, and the *Sunbeam* comes alongside looking bright and pretty as ever a yacht did on a summer sea. I 'ollers out, 'Is Brassey aboard?' 'Yes,' says the steward. 'I'll fetch 'im, Mr. Wales; I know as 'ow 'e'd be glad to see you.' So up comes Brassey. 'Is that you, Oliver?' 'e says; 'ow are yer? And 'ow's the 'Ay-market doing? All going strong, I 'ope?' "

Inquiry following upon this remarkable encounter resulted in the discovery that Mr. Wales had not left London at all.

One summer I remember asking him myself where he had spent his time.

"Well, guvnor," was the reply, "being a member of the British Association of Deep-Sea Anglers, I spent my time on a barge between Trouvillery and Deauvilly."

"Was Wales really off fishing?" I asked my dresser late in the evening.

"Don't you believe it, sir," was the reply. "He never left Suffolk Street."

I forgot to mention, by the way, that Wales was not a little proud of the connection between his name and the Royal title. One night when the Prince of Wales visited the theatre I said something about his namesake being in front.

"Yes, sir," Wales promptly said, "I thought I'd let him 'ave the title."

Another legacy left by Mr. Tree, and one far less desirable than poor old Oliver Wales, was an extremely objectionable and offensive beggar who haunted the stage door so consistently that he became an abominable nuisance. At last he was quietly informed by some one in authority that if he did not desert his favourite haunt strong measures would have to be taken.

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"Very well," said the beggar, "if you will 'ave it so. But," he added threateningly, "I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll go over to Mr. Tree's."

Friend and admirer as I am of Mr. Tree, I thank Heaven that the beggar carried out his threat.

I daily dread a reversal of the procedure!

I have already referred to Mr. Tree's indomitable pluck. An incident in his career illustrates it well. When "The Dancing Girl" was put on at the Haymarket Tree fell seriously ill, and was totally unable to appear on the first night of the production, Harrison having to immediately study and play the part of the Duke of Guisebury, which, as a matter of fact, he acted for many nights subsequently. But ill though Tree was, nothing would keep him away from the theatre for long, and he simply insisted on playing despite the doctor's remonstrances. So the theatre was expressly warmed up to a certain temperature, and Tree wore cotton wool next to his skin, and was followed about during the performance by hospital nurses!

It was during the run of "The Dancing Girl," by the way, that an extremely amusing incident occurred. At the end of the third act came the dramatic departure of all the Duke of Guisebury's guests, who had to leave Tree standing alone on the stage, a ruined man determined to commit suicide. The departure of the guests and the calling of the carriages had to be done with the greatest possible care so as not to interfere in any way with the dramatic effect of the end of the act. Fred Kerr, who was playing one of the guests, told one of the stage servants under his breath to call him a hansom, just as a joke. Imagine his horror when the said stage servant roared out in stentorian tones: "'Ansom up there for Mr. Slingsby."

Needless to say that the curtain fell amid roars of



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laughter from the whole house. Tree was furious, and pursued the luckless stage servant all over the flies and out on to the roof. Rustication from the bill for a few nights was his eventual punishment.

I always think that one of the best stories about my friend Tree is what, I fear, the critics will instantly dub a "chestnut." But chestnut or no chestnut, I cannot resist the telling of it. It was during the run of "The Village Priest," and the booking was extremely good. One night when Tree was leaving the theatre he stopped to speak a word with one of the commissionaires, an Irishman, who promptly gave expression to his joy over the success with which the piece had met.

"Carriages roll up all day long, and the booking is tremendous," went on the voluble Irishman. "And, Mr. Tree, sorr, if I may say so, it proves to me conclusively that you are one of the first twenty leading actors in London, sorr, and there's no getting away from the fact, sorr!"

My friend Charles Allan, who like myself is proud of being an old Carthusian, tells one or two good stories of his connection with the Haymarket Theatre under Tree's management. One night, he, Kemble, and Charles Collette were playing "Done on Both Sides" as a first piece, and during the struggle for the possession of the property haunch of venison Allan somehow or another managed to fling it into the stalls. A programme-girl, who was ushering in some visitors, saved the situation by politely handing the venison back amid roars of laughter and applause from the gallery. "Done on Both Sides" probably never went better in all its long life.

In "A Man's Shadow," one of Tree's early and most successful productions, Allan had to play the banker,

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who, many playgoers will doubtless remember, had to be murdered by Tree behind a gauze. The deadly deed was supposed to be effected by pistol shot, but one night something went wrong with the revolver, and it stubbornly refused to go off. Tree, ever prompt and ready in an emergency, at once seized the pistol by the barrel and proceeded to brain the luckless Allan with the butt-end. Allan assures me, however, that Tree's fell purpose was accomplished extremely gently. Nor was my old schoolfellow long in dying, lest further complications should result !

Among Allan's treasured possessions, by the way, is a little Japanese doll, which was given to him by his manager at a rather original moment in a flying *matinée* at Brighton during the run of "The Charlatan." Allan was playing a dean, who had to be introduced to Tree in one of the scenes. Upon this introduction being made Tree shook Allan's hand heartily, leaving in it a little Japanese doll which he found in the green-room.

It was during the run of "The Red Lamp," one of Tree's greatest successes, that an awkward *contretemps* occurred. At one of the *matinées* that clever actress Miss Rosina Filippi failed to turn up, and the situation was made more awkward by the fact that she had no understudy. Something had to be done, however, and an extra lady was bidden to go on for the part and be word perfect. The scene that followed can be better imagined than described. The orchestra was busy with the overture, and there in a corner of the stage was the unhappy "extra lady" crying and sobbing and studying aloud all at the same time ! The part was a long one, and she had but a few minutes in which to learn the words, but she was plucky enough to believe that she could perform what was really the

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impossible. Luckily, however, a minute or two before the raising of the curtain in walked Miss Fillipi and saved the situation.

When Mr. Tree produced "Henry IV." a comical little incident occurred one night. As all those who have seen or read the immortal work will remember, one of the scenes ends with the stage being strewn with dead soldiers. On the occasion of which I write some of the scene shifters who were in the flies having to walk across a beam to get to their places, managed to knock off a quantity of dust in passing. The dust fell upon the faces of the annihilated warriors, more than one of whom promptly began to sneeze. The effect of the scene for the one night was irretrievably ruined. This reminds me of the story of the super who, taking considerable interest in stage affairs, went up into the "flies" one night to see the effect of the scene from that lofty position. No sooner had he reached the elevated spot, however, than he heard his cue given on the stage. "Lawd 'elp me," he cried aloud, "will nobody chuck me down!"

Charlie Brookfield, of whom I suppose I can safely say that he is one of the wittiest men alive, was a favourite member of the Haymarket company while Tree was its lessee and manager, and many were the laughs he raised off the stage by his funny sayings and doings, quite apart from his always admirable acting. One morning, a very hot morning if I remember rightly, he was rehearsing a rather important scene with Tree, one that required the closest possible attention. In the middle of it a peripatetic nigger struck up a lively tune on his banjo in Suffolk Street and started to sing the latest popular tune. Tree stood this for a while, but at last became exasperated.

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"For Heaven's sake, go and stop that fellow, Brookfield," he exclaimed; "I simply can't rehearse."

Brookfield at once rushed out—only to return with the nigger, whom he formally presented to his manager.

I referred just now, by the way, to my old friend Harry Kemble. Perhaps I may be permitted here to tell a rather good story about him. He, George Giddens, and I went one autumn not many years ago to fish in Shetland. Among the people staying at the hotel with us was a man who took the greatest interest in us and all our doings, and especially Kemble. At last one day he managed to get into conversation with me and questioned me eagerly about my friends.

"And who," he asked, "is that stout gentleman?"

"Mr. Henry Kemble," I said.

"Ah, I thought I knew his face," was the reply. "How stupid of me; of course he was Cissie in last year's pantomime at Drury Lane."

He had mistaken my dear old friend for that other clever comedian, Mr. Herbert Campbell.

Talking of Shetland reminds me that from those distant isles I imported a servant whose admirable waiting at table had much impressed me. Importation, however, did not improve him, and he had before long to return to his native land. One night I asked whether he would not like to go to the Haymarket. He betrayed no enthusiasm.

"But wouldn't you like to see me act?" I asked, rather nettled. "I'll go if you want me to," was his only reply.

Tree, as all who know him well are aware, can be extremely amusing when he likes, and often keeps the supper table at the Garrick in roars of laughter on Saturday nights "after the show." His wit, too, is very ready. I always laugh when I remember his

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reply to an extremely tiresome person who was for ever haunting his stage door, and endeavouring to obtain an interview with him on some absurd pretext or another. One night this human nuisance managed to pass the stage doorkeeper and was half-way up the stairs to Tree's dressing-room when whom should he run into but the manager himself, ready "dressed" for his part, and on the way to take his cue.

"Oh, I'm so sorry to trouble you, Mr. Tree," began the unfortunate visitor, "but of course you'll remember——"

"Remember!" interrupted Tree in his best manner, "remember! I never remember anything—when I've got my 'make-up' on."

And he went on the stage without another word.

On one occasion Tree was in a somewhat awkward predicament. He had run down to the provinces to play a *matinée*, and the town being some considerable distance from London, there was nothing for him to do but to dress and "make-up" for the evening performance at the Haymarket in the railway carriage during the return journey. The guard personally ushered him into a carriage at the provincial station, and the moment the train was well in motion Tree made-up and dressed with his usual care, transforming himself from his usual charming self into a Svengali or some such objectionable personality. The guard, as guards will, being like other of their fellow-creatures seldom adverse to a tip, came to the carriage door at the end of the journey to release his passenger. Imagine his astonishment when, instead of the clean shaven, immaculate gentleman, on whom he had shut the door at the county town, he was confronted by a desperate villain of a murderous type. Scenting a ghastly tragedy the guard refused to let the villain pass,



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despite his urgent protestation that he would be infernally late.

"That won't do, my man," he said; "you've got to come along with me."

Tree, realising the awful possibilities of a sojourn in a police station pending investigation of his supposed crime, used all his eloquence to explain matters, but it was some considerable time before the guard would be convinced that his captive was the popular manager of the Haymarket Theatre. Luckily the adventure ended in Mr. Tree being but a few minutes late for the performance.

Tree's biggest success during his management of the Haymarket was undoubtedly "Trilby," which he played for many weeks to the comfortable profit of a thousand pounds a week, some twenty thousand pounds having been cleared by the end of the run.

Tree gave his last performance at the Haymarket on the 15th of July 1896, the programme consisting of selections from the most successful plays in his repertoire. Immediately after the audience had left the house, the stalls were cleared away and four separate supper parties were given in the building—one on the stage for the company, another on the floor of the auditorium to the stage staff, a third in the foyer to the attendants, and a fourth in the refreshment saloon to the orchestra. Yet another party of nearly a hundred of Mr. and Mrs. Tree's friends were entertained at the Savoy.

## CHAPTER XIV

My excuse for devoting so much of this book to Harrison's and my own management is, I venture to think, a good one, for it is practically only of the days since we first put our joint names on the bills and programmes that I can write intimately of the Theatre Royal Haymarket. Hitherto I have had to depend upon old records and the help of no end of good friends, without whom I could never have attempted a work of this description; now I can write largely from personal knowledge and experience, and with greater confidence in the accuracy of my facts.

At any rate I will allow no one to call in question the accuracy of my statement when I say that the days and the hours that immediately preceded our first nights were some of the very worst I have ever spent—and an actor's life is never a bed of roses. Had it not been for my association with one to whose sound advice and perfectly even temperament I would pay special tribute here, I sometimes doubt whether that curtain would have risen on anything but my corpse. But my partner's calm reliance and unfailing belief in our success pulled me through, though my gratitude to him in those trying days was no greater than it is in these pleasanter hours. I have been accused of being lucky, and there is some truth in the accusation, but in no instance have I been luckier



FREDERICK HARRISON, LESSEE AND CO-MANAGER OF  
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PLATE XVI



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than in my association with a partner from whom I hope never to be separated.

But to go back to the troubled waters of those early days. To this hour they haunt me in my dreams—the worries, the anxieties, the fears, and the thousand and one little hitches inseparable from this business of ours. One day in particular I shall never forget. Harrison and I had just completed our arrangements to open as joint-managers when I was invited by my kind friends the Gilberts to lunch at their delightful place near Harrow, Grim's Dyke. I remember I felt more cheerful that morning. After all, I thought, others have succeeded at the Haymarket before, why should I anticipate failure? My good friends' hearty welcome cheered me still more, and I can remember few pleasanter lunches. But lunch over, Sir Squire Bancroft suggested a stroll in the gardens while finishing our cigars. I confided to him that my arrangements to follow in his footsteps were completed, adding that I dreaded the first night. Whereupon he proceeded to give me at some length a description of his first night at the Haymarket—how, after spending £20,000 on the alterations of the new theatre, the first night turned out to be foggy, and how he himself had been hooted and yelled at for removing the pit. Never shall I forget that description! Night after night after hearing it I lay awake thinking of the awful nights to come.

The day after my lunch at Grim's Dyke, Harrison and I went down to look at our new possession, with some pride I must confess. But when we got inside our pride was to receive a rude shock. The County Council had stretched out its inexorable, all-changing hand, and chaos reigned supreme. The old wooden staircase behind the scenes was gutted, as concrete stairs



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had to be erected in its stead ; and a fireproof wall between the dressing-rooms and the stage was in the building. The din and dust were awful, and a scene cloth was nailed tightly across the proscenium to keep the dust from penetrating to the front of the house. It was in such charming surroundings that we rehearsed " Under the Red Robe " for six weeks.

At last came the awful first night. Everything was late owing to unforeseen circumstances. The scenery was unfinished ; and the front of the house was in the possession of no less than one hundred workmen and workwomen, who streamed out of the stage door just as we opened the doors giving on to the street. While the pitites were settling themselves in their seats, the scenic artists were putting the finishing touches to their work, and every one was busy doing some job or another. I was in the theatre from eleven until seven, until at last I could stand the anxiety no longer and went out to meditate on Sir Squire Bancroft's words at Grim's Dyke. However, the night had to be gone through somehow, so back I went to dress, my thoughts for the first time on a first night being busy with the piece, and not with my own part, which was, I confess, scarcely congenial to me.

Of what followed I have no need to write. " Under the Red Robe " was a big success for all connected with it, and ran some 250 nights, but few who saw it ever thought of the agony we went through until the curtain came down for the last time on that, to me, very memorable first night.

By the way, my friend Edward Rose, who adapted the play from Mr. Stanley Weyman's capital novel, has reminded me that it was not only in the Haymarket we rehearsed. In a letter sent to me not many weeks ago the writer says :

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"Before our poor romantic drama saw the foot-lights it had a vagabond life of rehearsals, such as surely was never known to any play produced by a first-rate management at the re-opening of a first-rate theatre. The Haymarket was being largely rebuilt, and we rehearsed one day on the huge Adelphi stage, and the next at the tiny Vaudeville, and the day after at the Lyric—a beautiful theatre, when you are not turned off the stage, and reminded of amateur days and the Theatre Royal back drawing-room, by a rehearsal among the comfortable lounges of the saloon. I have no doubt that we tried several other stages, but their memory has faded: the only one that I can never forget, as upon it the only entirely useless and disagreeable rehearsals took place, was that of the Haymarket itself. Why the builder, the stage-carpenter, and every other mechanic who sets his foot in a theatre feels it his duty to begin to hammer as soon as the actor begins to speak is a mystery which has always been unfathomable. I would only point out to the scientific that, though there is no explanation of this strange fact, it has its analogy in the animal world—the caged canary conducts his conversation, to quote Mr. Weller, Sen., 'on the same genteel principle.'"

I had almost forgotten another incident in connection with our first night. Amid the hubbub and dust came, to our mingled joy and consternation, a command from the Princess of Wales for the Royal Box. Seeing the condition that everything was in, and our doubts as to whether we should be able to open at all that night, our feelings at the receipt of the gracious message may be excused for being mixed. However, Harrison at once set to work to make everything right for the Royal party, and I have

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reason to hope that the occupants of Box 4 were never conscious of our difficulties that night.

My first introduction to Royalty, by the way, provoked rather a funny incident. Being no great conversationalist, I was, I confess, a little nervous, and on making my bow, fidgeted awkwardly with my opera hat, which I carried squashed up against my agitated breast. Scarcely had I got my head to what I supposed to be the right incline, when pop went my hat with a loud report. My confusion was covered by a hearty laugh from the Royal party.

One other Royal incident connected with our management is, perhaps, worth describing. His Majesty King Edward, then of course Prince of Wales, was in the Royal Box one night with Princess Maud of Wales. It was during the run of "The Marriage of Convenience," in which poor Terriss played so splendidly; it was his last engagement but one, by the way. Between the acts his Majesty sent for my wife, poor Terriss, and myself, being desirous of expressing his gracious approval of our efforts to amuse. I must confess that I was not a little nervous, and my conversational powers were at their very worst.

Things were going distinctly stiffly when Terriss said in his cheery, sailor-like manner:

"We all hope Persimmon will win the Gold Cup tomorrow, sir!"

"Thank you, Mr. Terriss," replied his Majesty, "it is most kind of you to say that. So you are all interested in my horse?"

"Oh yes, sir," was Terriss's reply, "we've all got our shirts on him!"

Needless to say the king was enormously amused, and all signs of stiffness disappeared after that.

Poor Terriss, it is interesting to remember, was

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always fond of talking about death, though a heartier, cheerier man surely never stepped. One of his peculiarities was that he was very fond of lying on the floor of his dressing-room between the shows absolutely stark naked. Possibly his splendid health was in part attributable to these air-baths. I remember another actor who has passed away who always swore by them. He took his baths by wandering about in his "birthday suit"—as a friend of mind calls it—before any one else in the house was up.

Yet another Royal story and I will descend to lowlier mortals. The Royalty of this anecdote was an Eastern potentate, who was a great friend of a member of our company and often used to come behind the scenes between the acts. One night he honoured me with a visit in my dressing-room. He informed me that he was shortly going to appear in some theatricals himself. Visions of Othello and other Orientals at once flashed through my mind. Judge of my astonishment when he replied :

"Oh no, I am going to play Old Hardcastle in 'She Stoops to Conquer' at St. Petersburg!"

Talking of amateur theatricals reminds me of our Charterhouse matinée given some four years ago in aid of the Charterhouse mission. The matinée was not altogether amateur, but one of the "stars" that afternoon was General Baden-Powell, who, I suppose, can scarcely be called a professional. Our programme consisted of a scene from "The School for Scandal," a translation of "Gringoire," a one-act play by Mr. Hartley Manners, entitled "A Queen's Messenger," and last, but not least, a special Charterhouse burlesque, of which "B. P." was the leading feature. He was just as keen a worker on the Haymarket stage as on the

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South African veldt ; in fact I don't think I ever saw an actor, amateur or professional, work with greater good will. No one who saw him skipping about dancing a *pas seul* one moment, singing a song with me the next, and ending up with a long declaration speech to the ghosts of past distinguished Carthusians dressed as an imaginary headmaster of Charterhouse, would have believed that he was anything else but an actor by profession. The only thing that might have made them change their opinion was that he had to come to rehearsal more than once in a cavalry colonel's full uniform ! It was distinctly funny to see him dancing about the stage in full kit to a tune which has now become quite a standing dish at our own theatre, is always played whenever "B.P." honours us with a visit, and which we have dubbed "B. P.'s anthem."

Among the other ghosts that General Baden-Powell had to address in the Charterhouse burlesque was that of Havelock. A few days after the performance he was walking down Piccadilly when he ran into Lord Wolseley.

"What are you doing here ?" asked the then Commander-in-chief.

"I have just got back from India on leave, sir," replied "B. P."

"You are just the man I want," said Wolseley, and off he packed him to Mafeking.

I need hardly say that it was with no little pride and affection that we of the Haymarket Theatre watched "B. P.'s" career throughout the war. On Mafeking night the whole staff collected on the stage after the performance to drink his health. To our great delight Canon Haig-Brown, the former headmaster of Charterhouse, and the present Master of the



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Charterhouse (under whom both I and my collaborator had the pleasure of working, as boys) was present, and made a little speech. He had not intended to say anything, and as a matter of fact I was just going to say something myself, when one of the stage hands called out :

“S-sh, s-sh, we want to hear what the old schoolmaster has to say !”

Those who know Canon Haig-Brown will not need my assurance that what “the old schoolmaster” had to say was full of real feeling and very much to the point. Surely no headmaster who ever lived had, and has, more real regard for the school of which he was so splendid a head, or for the boys who worked under him.

We do not often have festive gatherings on the stage of the Haymarket Theatre such as our celebration of Mafeking night, but on the night preceding Christmas Eve we keep up the festive season in right royal fashion. The whole of the company, together with some others connected with the theatre, join us in presenting every member of our working staff, both in front and behind the scenes, with either a goose or turkey or a joint of beef or pork. The presents are laid out on big long tables, and the stage is decorated in the Christmas fashion with holly and mistletoe and hanging lights, which give it a most festive appearance. In fact I am almost inclined to assert that one of the best “sets” at the Haymarket is to be seen at Christmas-tide. Our sergeant who presides over the stage door blows a call on the trumpet, and on to the stage we troop, some two hundred and fifty strong. One of us calls out the names of those who are to receive presents, while the other takes a piece of paper, on which the description of the particular article to which

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the person is entitled is written, out of a bowl. The distribution of presents over, great bowls of punch are brought in, and we wish each other a merry Christmas in bumpers. The evening winds up with a performance by the junior members of the company, which takes the form of either a *revue*, or of a good old-fashioned knockabout harlequinade.

During the run of "The Little Minister" we were, I need scarcely say, very Scotch, and it was generally agreed that at our Christmas gathering the bagpipes must be a feature of the entertainment. A piper from the Scots Guards was duly engaged. He strutted about playing some tune that delighted us enormously, and we gave him a tremendous reception. But a very old friend of ours, then a member of our company, and a keen soldier, was not satisfied.

"Wait a moment, boys," said he, full of the memory of Dargai, which was uppermost in most men's minds just then, "I'll get him to play the 'Cock o' the North.'"

"Hear, hear," came from all sides.

Our old friend walked up to the piper and patted him on the shoulder.

"That's very good, my man," he said, "but give us a taste of 'The Cock o' the North.'"

The piper's face was a study as he replied :

"Mun, a've bin playin' it for the last quarter of an oor."

But my recollections of the few years that have passed since Harrison and I first became managers of the Haymarket—fortunate as those years have been—are, as must needs be, not unmixed with sadness. Apart from the death of poor William Terriss, who, I venture to think, made one of his greatest successes under our management, another great player who was one of the most brilliant members of our company,

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and was beloved by all who came in contact with her, has passed away. Need I say that I refer to my dear old friend, that sweet and gentle lady, Rose Leclercq? So far as my short recollection goes, she never had an equal in her own line, and it will be long indeed before her place is filled. No queen had manners so exquisite; she was indeed a *grande dame jusqu'au bout des ongles*, and a *grande dame* in more senses than one. Yet she was always full of fun, always genial, never complaining. I have even heard a lady well known in London society say that she would have given anything to have been able to engage Rose Leclercq to receive her guests at her big receptions!

Poor Rose Leclercq had a most extraordinary sneeze, at least it could hardly be called a sneeze—it was a sharp piercing scream that could be heard all over the theatre. She was well aware of this failing—if failing it could be called—and often used to joke about it. One of her chief peculiarities was an intense dislike to being talked to just before she had to go on the stage, and those who ventured to approach her at such a moment would find themselves waved away with that wonderful queenly air that has surely had few equals. This queenly air, by the way, sometimes had a distinctly terrifying effect upon those who were unaware of Rose Leclercq's ways. One night I remember my dresser went to her with some message or another. In a moment or two he returned, much crestfallen.

“What's the matter?” I asked. “I don't know sir,” was the reply, “but I'm afraid Miss Leclercq's taken a dislike to me. She won't let me go near her.”

Rose Leclercq's great pet was a little dog, whose

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parents may possibly, at some time or another, have had something to do with the dachshund species. Nothing amused the animal's mistress more than to sing a short piece of operatic recitative to him, at the end of which performance he would gaze piteously at the sky and emit a fearful howl. The effect was really ludicrous in the extreme.

I remember a good story that Rose Leclercq was fond of telling. She was touring with "East Lynne," and the Little Willie in the company fell sick and had to be sent away. Rose Leclercq was in despair of finding a substitute, when a lady of her company came up and said :

"Oh, dear Miss Leclercq, do let me have my little boy with us. He has been for a couple of years on a farm in Devonshire, but he is wonderfully clever and bright, and he knows Little Willie well, because I've told him about the play and sent him the part to study to amuse him. The people at the farm say he's so clever at it ! "

Little Willie was duly sent for, but Rose Leclercq, who was seedy at the time, left him to be rehearsed by his mother, and did not see him until she came on the stage. Imagine her horror when she found that he was possessed of a peculiarly strong Devonshire accent, which scarcely gave point to the line "I want to see my motherrr." Nor were matters improved when he gave vent to "Put me down aside the firre."

This reminds me of another story which can hardly be said to belong to the Haymarket. When Harrison was joint-manager of the Lyceum with Forbes Robertson, Mr. Horace Watson was business-manager, just as he is our very excellent business-manager to-day. Among the attendants under Watson's care were a

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number of boys in Eton jackets, whose business was the dispensation of programmes. One night one of the boys came up to Watson's office in a flood of tears. On being asked what was the matter, he explained that his finer feelings had been hurt by another boy spitting on him. Watson promptly sought out the offender and charged him with his crime.

"I didn't spit, sir," said the alleged offender, "I dribbled. I always do dribble."

Two more stories which have little to do with the Haymarket and I will return to the theatre. They are both connected with Charles Brookfield, in whose clever literary footsteps I follow, I confess, with trembling gait, and both have to do with that clever little piece "The Burglar and the Judge," which we played with some success at the Haymarket. One afternoon we gave it at a benefit at a particularly large and well-known theatre. The stage-manager, a cheery fellow and a great personal friend of mine, was possessed of a peculiarly large nose, and his features generally were what in all fairness might be called "striking." As Brookfield and I came out of our dressing-rooms the stage-manager met us and complimented me very kindly on my make-up as the old Judge. I thanked him heartily, and without really thinking of what I was saying congratulated him on his make-up.

"My make-up as what?" he asked rather surprised.

"Why, as stage-manager, of course," said I.

"And not a bit too heavy for this theatre," whispered Brookfield.

One night Mrs. Beer asked us to give "The Burglar and the Judge" at her house in Chesterfield Gardens. As we had not played the piece for some little time Brookfield suggested a rehearsal in the drawing-room,



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to which I readily agreed. So, on the morning of the day of the performance we arrived at Mrs. Beer's house, and the drawing-room was placed at our disposal. As the Burglar, Brookfield had to make his entrance through a window, and as, of course, there was no scenery, there was nothing for him to do but to hide behind the drawing-room blinds and curtains and come in that way. He had just begun to rehearse the entrance when we were disturbed by a violent ringing of the bell. This was closely followed by the breathless appearance of the butler.

"Mrs. So-and-so from over the way presents her compliments, ma'am," he gasped, "and do you know there's a burglar hiding behind your drawing-room curtains?"

At night after the performance, as Brookfield and I were hurrying away, we were stopped by the butler, who begged us to go in and have some supper, explaining that his mistress would be very hurt if we went without taking anything. I pleaded an excuse and bolted, but Brookfield begged the butler to take him round by a side door as he was anxious not to mix with the guests just after the performance, being, I suppose, doubtful as to whether he had got all his make-up off.

The butler led the way to an entrance to the dining-room on the servant's staircase, begging Brookfield to wait there while he fetched him something.

Brookfield found the place already occupied by a stout and very charming elderly member of society, who greeted him most heartily.

"Ah, Mr. Brookfield," she said, "is that you? How delightful. This is the way I always get my supper at squashes. I stand at the side door and get the servant to fetch me something."

## CHAPTER XV

"THE Little Minister" has been the most important and not the least successful of our fortunate series of plays since Harrison and myself first took up the well-named cares of management. Many things contributed to that success—the brilliance of the piece itself, the beautiful stage pictures contributed by our scenic artists, and the delightful music specially composed by our friend Sir Alexander Mackenzie. But I take a pardonable pride in believing that "The Little Minister" would not have drawn such large congregations for so great a number of nights had it not been for my wife's performance of "Babbie." In saying which I am, after all, only quoting the greater critics and Mr. Barrie himself; though I may be accused of unpardonable sin in introducing the subject at all into this book. Yet, while still on my defence, I venture to think that that patient historian of the Haymarket, who shall surely follow some day in my inadequate footsteps, will include my wife's "Babbie" in his list of the many great acting triumphs associated with the theatre.

For "Babbie" is a part worthy of even higher consideration than has yet been accorded it—a part to test an actress's capabilities to the highest limits. It is not Shakespeare I admit, but it is pure comedy, and pure comedy is harder to play than many would believe

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who never essayed it. I would apologise for referring to my wife's acting at all, were it not that I find some difficulty in ignoring her when I come to those chapters that connect our management of the Haymarket Theatre. It would have been tantamount to writing of the years of Foote's régime and ignoring Samuel Foote. For it needs no argument of mine to prove that without Samuel Foote, Foote would never have managed the Haymarket Theatre, and I dare swear that without Winifred Emery the partnership of Messrs. Harrison & Maude would never have come even within the range of possibilities. We may have been fortunate in the selection of our plays, careful in the selection of our casts, happy in the choice of our performers. But our management—and I speak with a husband's pardonable pride—would never have been launched on successful voyages without her who was the mainstay of it until illness laid her low not a few months since. I write, though none will believe it, from the hard, brutal heart of a joint-manager in natural gratitude to one who has all through been an ideal leading lady. By the way, it is a curious coincidence that it was in a box at the Haymarket that I first made my wife's acquaintance.

Our good friend Barrie, to the reappearance of whose name on our play-bills we are eagerly looking forward, cherishes, I hope, many pleasant recollections of our production of "The Little Minister," but I know that it left him with one unpleasant souvenir. It was while we were rehearsing the piece that this souvenir was brought about. Barrie and I were sitting as usual on a sort of little platform, built on to the front of the stage, from which we could conduct the rehearsal without interfering with the movements of the characters. Unhappily the railing that surrounded the



*From the miniature by Mr. Simpson*

MISS WINIFRED EMERY (MRS. CYRIL MAUDE)  
AS 'LADY HAVEL'

PLATE XVII





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little platform was not of the strongest, and Barrie, who, as all his intimates know, is fond of lolling about on chairs in the most extraordinary attitudes, leant heavily against it with his seat half tilted. Suddenly, without a second's warning, smash went the railing, and over fell our author with a crash. The fall was of some six or seven feet, and imagine our horror when on going to pick up Barrie we found him apparently lifeless. We carried him as gently as possible up to my office, laid him on the sofa, and dismissed the rehearsal. Happily in a very few moments he revived, and even regained his usual spirits ; but then, every one who knows Barrie is well aware of how plucky he is, and what a thorough little sportsman he is in every way.

There must, I imagine, have been a pressman among our "extra gentlemen," or, at any rate, some one who was glad to earn five shillings by giving news of the event ; in any case, in a very short time the news boys were running about with contents' bills on which "Accident to Mr. J. M. Barrie" was printed in large letters. These bills were shortly afterwards followed by the card of a reporter on a well-known evening paper of the "Yellow Press" distinction.

"Well, this is quick work with a vengeance," laughed Barrie. "Do for goodness' sake prevent their making a fuss about it. Tell them it's nothing much."

The reporter was shown into my dressing-room which leads into the office, so that Barrie could hear every word that we said.

"I hear," began the reporter, "that Mr. Barrie has met with an accident."

"Oh no, it's nothing," I replied cheerily ; "he's all right now, merely a severe shock."

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"What!" exclaimed the disappointed reporter;  
"not a really bad accident?"

"Oh, dear no," I said.

"What!" This time the journalist's tones were literally tragic in their disappointment. "*No blood?*"

I fancied I heard a chuckle from the sofa next door, but thinking I might be mistaken I went on to impress the reporter with the triviality of the accident.

"I must beg you not to exaggerate the matter in any way," I wound up.

"Certainly not, Mr. Maude," was the dignified reply.

"We never exaggerate on our paper."

The necessary suppression of the paper's name detracts, I admit, from the point of the story!

Sir Alexander Mackenzie, I fear, found the rehearsals of his charming music not a little trying. All rehearsals, let me hasten to add, are tests of temper, and musical rehearsals especially so. What made our musical rehearsals particularly tedious was that, our orchestra being under the stage, it was extremely difficult to get the proper effect, and very hard for Sir Alexander to explain what he wanted to our conductor.

One day the great composer was especially exasperated. He came up to me, despair written all over his face.

"I say, Maude," he stammered, "do you, do you—damn it, do you mind if I smash my hat!"

The objection to having an orchestra under the stage (it has its advantages, let me managerially confess) was proved one night by the visit of a student of the Royal Academy of Music to "The Little Minister."

"What did you think of the Principal's music?" he was afterwards asked.

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"Principal's music?" was his astonished reply.  
"Did he write music for it? I never heard any!"

There is one more story of Sir Alexander Mackenzie that I cannot forbear telling. At the end of the run of "The Little Minister" we sent him a slight token of our gratitude. Sir Alexander is possessed of a faithful and privileged domestic, and on the arrival of the little present she was sent for to inspect it. Her only comment was:

"Lord! what a waste of money!"

A year or two after the production of "The Little Minister" I made my summer holiday in Scotland. Naturally I was much interested in Scotch ministers, and on arrival at a small out-of-the-way place in the north I asked the lady with whom I was staying what the minister of the Auld Lichts was like in appearance.

"Well," replied she, "I am not quite sure that he's particular acceptable from the stage point of view. It was only the other day at a picnic that I saw him. Among the people was a young man in a flaring check suit, smoking a very large cigar, and flirting something terribly with the girls. 'Who is the young man?' I asked a friend. 'Don't you know?' she replied; 'why, it's the new Auld Licht Minister.'"

While we were playing "The Little Minister" some real Auld Licht Kirk elders from Kirriemuir (of "A Window in Thrums" fame) came round behind to pay us a visit. They were intensely interested in their prototypes (those excellent prototypes, Mr. Brandon Thomas, Mr. Mark Kinghorne, and Mr. Holman Clark), and were delighted when I introduced them one to another. It was a meeting of Church and Stage with a vengeance!

The production of a play, no matter of what kind, is a far more serious and difficult matter than the

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uninitiated imagine. Unless one has actually produced a play oneself it is almost impossible to realise the enormous mass of detail, and, in historical pieces, the quantity of research required. Those who see the finished picture often have no idea of the weeks of work we managers have devoted to what may seem trivial enough. Yet in such case if care were not taken I doubt whether any but the most extraordinarily brilliant of plays would last long in these exacting days. But while I would not for one moment deny that the production of plays has its interesting moments, at the same time it can prove most embarrassing, though I confess that I only found it embarrassing once. That was the production of "Frocks and Frills."

Harrison and I being naturally anxious to get as much real "local colour" into the piece as possible, arranged to visit the various important dressmaking establishments. Never shall I forget these pilgrimages in search of the true modiste's atmosphere. The first time a bevy of gorgeous ladies in magnificent costumes were paraded before our mere male eyes, we sat and looked at them as shy as a pair of blushing schoolboys, and never before or since have I felt so absolutely at a loss as to what to say. For the life of me I could not conjure up one single appropriate remark.

Happily we got all the "local colour" we wanted from outside, but to make our stage pictures more perfect we persuaded the manageress of a famous *couturière* to come down to rehearsal once or twice in order to see that our "model ladies" in the shop scene paraded after the strictly orthodox manner. At the first rehearsal, after watching the ladies for some little time, the manageress came up to me and said :

"May I say just one word, Mr. Maude ?"

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"Of course," I replied, "that is exactly why I wanted you to come here."

"Very well then," she called out to a young lady who was ambling about in a gorgeous ball-gown. "That is very nice, very nice indeed, but, please, walk more slowly, and put up your hand to stroke your nose—or anything to show the sleeve."

At one great dressmaker's, after a charming young lady had exhibited some particularly lovely costumes to our uncultured eyes, the manageress said:

"Did you notice that young lady's figure? Particularly graceful, was it not? But I assure you she was nothing till she came to us."

Talking of young ladies reminds me of when we were engaging "extra ladies" for the big scene in "The Black Tulip" an applicant for the post made her appearance and was shown in to the stage-manager, who decided that she would not do, and politely declined her offer. The young lady not understanding the reason for the refusal promptly went home, changed her hat, and returned with all speed to the theatre. Poor young lady! she thought it was her hat that had been the cause of her failure to please!

One of the very important people in connection with our productions is our incomparable perruquier, Mr. William Clarkson. The importance of his art to the success of a play can be best explained by the following story, for which I will not vouch.

It was soon after the first night of a new play—at what theatre I will not say. The people were streaming out, and among them Clarkson, who is seldom, if ever, absent from first nights. To him came an interested player from a rival theatre eager for the news of the play.



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"How did the piece go?" he asked. "Was it a success?"

"Certainly," replied Clarkson; "couldn't see a join."

I must now crave the indulgence of my readers, and beg his and her leave to address them. It is in reference to the next chapter of this book. On the face of it it would seem that it were written by me. I deny the impeachment—absolutely. In the first place, I would not for one moment lay claim to such knowledge of style as is therein betrayed; in the second, I would not aspire to the bluntness, to put it mildly, therein shown. The chapter was sent to me as an aid to the completion of this work. It professes to deal with that period of our management when we rehearsed a piece by the brilliant Mr. Bernard Shaw. The writer, I am assured, is well fitted to deal with that period. I leave it to the reader to judge, and to guess its authorship. Were I the proprietor of a popular penny journal I would offer a prize in this connection; but, unhappily, I am only part-manager of a theatre. With the supposed facts, the sentiments, the whole trend of this chapter I and my collaborator entirely dissociate ourselves. But we confess that we have heard it whispered that we would never print it.

## CHAPTER XVI

I NOW come to an episode in the history of the theatre which might have wrecked our enterprise had not Providence, which has never yet disappointed our humble trust in it, caused the danger into which we had stumbled to withdraw itself at the eleventh hour.

I think it must have been in the year 1895 that the devil put it into the mind of a friend of mine to tempt me with news of a play called "Candida" by a writer named Bernard Shaw, of whom until then I had never heard. I wrote to him suggesting that he should let me see the play. He instantly undertook the management of our theatre to the extent of informing me that "Candida" would not suit us, but that he would write a new play for us—which I protest I never asked him to do. As I learnt subsequently, he then took a chair in Regent's Park for the whole season, and sat there in the public eye writing the threatened play.

In the winter of 1897 this play, which was called "You Never Can Tell," came to hand. Some of our friends thought well of the author, and Harrison (who, as my readers have doubtless already gathered, is a perfect ignoramus in all matters connected with plays and acting) liked the play. In short, I allowed myself to be overpersuaded, and we actually put the play into rehearsal.

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From the first the author showed the perversity of his disposition and his utter want of practical knowledge of the stage. He proposed impossible casts. He forced us into incomprehensible agreements by torturing us with endless talk until we were ready to sign anything rather than argue for another hour. Had I been properly supported by my colleagues I should not have tolerated his proceedings for a moment. I do not wish to complain of anybody, but as a matter of fact I was not so supported. I expected nothing better from Harrison, because with all his excellent qualities he is too vain—I say it though he is my best friend—to be trusted in so delicate an undertaking as the management of a theatre. The truth is, Shaw flattered him, and thus detached him from me by playing on his one fatal weakness.

The world knows, I think, that whatever my faults may be, I am an affectionate and devoted husband. But I have never pretended that my wife is perfect. No woman is, and but few men. Still, I do think she might have supported me better than she did through our greatest trial. This man from the first exercised a malign influence over her. With my full consent and approval she selected for herself a certain part in his play. He had privately resolved—out of mere love of contradiction—that she should play another. When he read the play he contrived to balance the parts in such a way that my unfortunate and misguided wife actually there and then gave up her part and accepted the one he had determined to throw upon her. I then recognised for the first time that I had to deal with a veritable Svengali.

Our mistake in admitting an author of this type to our theatre soon become apparent. At the reading, that excellent actor, Jack Barnes, whose very name

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calls up the idea of sound judgment, withdrew, overpowered by fatigue and disgust, at the end of the first act, and presently threw up the part with which we proposed to insult him—and I now publicly apologise to him for that outrage. Miss Coleman soon followed his example, with a very natural protest against a part in which, as she rightly said, there were “no laughs and no exits.” Any author with the slightest decency of feeling would have withdrawn in the face of rebuffs so pointed as these. But Mr. Shaw—encouraged, I must say, by Harrison—persisted in what had now become an intolerable intrusion.

I can hardly describe the rehearsals that followed. It may well be that my recollection of them is confused; for my nerves soon gave way; sleep became a stranger to me; and there were moments at which I was hardly in possession of my faculties. I had to stage-manage as well as act—to stage-manage with that demon sitting beside me casting an evil spell on all our efforts!

On one occasion Mr. Shaw insulted the entire profession by wanting a large table on the stage, on the ground that the company would fall over it unless they behaved as if they were coming into a real room instead of, as he coarsely observed, rushing to the float to pick up the band at the beginning of a comic song. This was a personal attack on me, as my vivacity of character and *diable au corps* make me specially impatient of obstacles.

Mr. Shaw was one of those persons who use a certain superficial reasonableness and dexterity of manner to cover an invincible obstinacy in their own opinion. We had engaged for the leading part (I myself having accepted an insignificant part as a mere waiter) no less an artist than Mr. Allan Aynesworth, whose re-

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putation and subsequent achievements make it unnecessary for me to justify our choice. Mr. Shaw had from the first contended that one of the scenes lay outside Mr. Aynesworth's peculiar province. There can be no doubt now that Mr. Shaw deliberately used his hypnotic power at rehearsal to compel Mr. Aynesworth to fulfil his prediction. In every other scene Mr. Aynesworth surpassed himself. In this he became conscious and confused ; his high spirits were suddenly extinguished ; even his good-humour left him. He was like a man under a spell—as no doubt he actually was—and his embarrassment communicated itself most painfully to my dear wife, who had to sit on the stage whilst Svengali deliberately tortured his victim.

At the same time I must say that Mrs. Maude's conduct was not all I could have desired. I greatly dreaded an open rupture between her and the author ; and the fiend somehow divined this, and used it as a means of annoying me. Sometimes, when he had cynically watched one of her scenes without any symptom of pleasure, I would venture to ask him his opinion of it. On such occasions he invariably rose with every appearance of angry disapproval, informed me that he would give his opinion to Miss Emery herself, and stalked up the stage to her in a threatening manner, leaving me in a state of apprehension that my overstrained nerves were ill able to bear. Not until afterwards did I learn that on these occasions he flattered my wife disgracefully, and actually made her a party to his systematic attempt to drive me out of my senses. I have never reproached her with this, and I never shall. I mention it here only because it is the truth ; and truth has always been with me the first consideration.

At last Aynesworth broke down under the torture.



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Mr. Shaw, with that perfidious air of making the best of everything which never deserted him, hypnotised him into complaining of the number of speeches he had to deliver, whereupon Mr. Shaw cut out no less than seventeen of them. This naturally disabled the artist totally. On the question of cutting, Mr. Shaw's attitude was nothing less than Satanic. When I suggested cutting he handed me the play, begged me to cut it freely, and then hypnotised me so that I could not collect my thoughts sufficiently to cut a single line. On the other hand, if I showed the least pleasure in a scene at rehearsal he at once cut it out on the ground that the play was too long. What I suffered from that man at that time will never be fully known. The heart alone knoweth its own bitterness.

The end came suddenly and unexpectedly. We had made a special effort to fulfil our unfortunate contract, of which even Harrison was now beginning to have his doubts. We had brought back Miss Kate Bishop from Australia to replace Miss Coleman. Mr. Valentine had taken the part repudiated by Mr. Barnes. The scenery had been modelled, and a real dentist's chair obtained for the first act. Harrison, whose folly was responsible for the whole wretched business, came down to the rehearsal. We were honestly anxious to retrieve the situation by a great effort, and save our dear little theatre from the disgrace of a failure.

Suddenly the author entered, *in a new suit of clothes!!*

I have little more to say. Nobody who had not seen Mr. Shaw sitting there day after day in a costume which the least self-respecting carpenter would have discarded months before, could possibly have understood the devastating effect of the new suit on our

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minds. That this was a calculated *coup de théâtre* I have not the slightest doubt. That it fulfilled its purpose I cannot deny. With distracted attentions, demented imaginations, and enfeebled reasons we made a bewildered effort to go through the first two acts. I saw with inexpressible aggravation that Harrison's face grew longer and longer as he contemplated our company blundering through a rehearsal like disconcerted amateurs (as if it were anybody's fault but his own). Talma himself would have broken down before the famous pit of kings if that new suit had been in the house.

I neither know nor care how it all ended. I remember Svengali privately informing Harrison and myself that he felt that our ruin and disgrace could only be averted by a heroic sacrifice on his part. If Harrison had had a spark of manhood he would have kicked him then and there into the Haymarket. But Harrison's deplorable weakness of character again allowed our enemy to pose as our benevolent rescuer. As for me, the man was in some sort my guest; besides, I was too unspeakably relieved by the prospect of being rid of him and his absurd play to make any difficulties.

In concluding this sickening record of a disastrous experience I desire to say that I have the greatest admiration for Mr. Shaw's talents and the sincerest esteem for his personal character. In any other walk of life than that of a dramatic author I should expect him to achieve a high measure of success. I understand that he has made considerable mark as a vestryman, collecting dust with punctuality and supervising drainage with public-spirited keenness. I do not blame him for imposing on Harrison, for Harrison's credulity simply invites imposture. I wish him well in every

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way, and I am glad to hear from time to time that he is prospering. I met him in Garrick Street not long ago, and noticed that he still wore the suit which he purchased in 1897 in anticipation of the royalties on "You Never Can Tell."

His name is never mentioned in my household.

## CHAPTER XVII

THERE are so many "oddities" connected with theatrical management of which the outside world scarcely ever hears anything that it may prove amusing to set down one or two of them here. Some day I feel sure that an enterprising box-office keeper, or a business-manager who can spare the time, will produce a little volume of the humours of the theatre; if so, these random notes of mine will prove of service to him.

One of the oddest things in connection with my brief experience of theatrical management is the extraordinary number of articles that my patrons are continually being so kind as to leave behind them after paying visits to our theatre. And it is not only the number of these articles that is so surprising, but very often their extraordinary and malapropos nature. Funnily enough the majority of the articles deserted in the various parts of the theatre remain unclaimed, though I need scarcely say that wherever it is possible to trace the owner he is communicated with at once. For the most part such things as gloves, sticks, umbrellas, purses, and handkerchiefs are the usual spoil of our lost property office, but its takings are by no means entirely confined to such commonplace necessities. Not very long ago an attendant discovered under one of the stall seats after a *matinée* performance a lady's bonnet, into which had been comfortably placed a

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pound of pork sausages! That luxury was never claimed. On another occasion—a very wet night—a gentleman, whose mind it could scarcely be impolite to call absent, left behind him his hat and overcoat, umbrella and gloves. Three weeks elapsed before he returned in search of the discarded articles. He turned out to be a smart, good-looking, young fellow, and asked quite casually whether by any chance his things had been found.

“It doesn’t really matter much, don’t you know,” said he. “But I know I left them behind somewhere, though I can’t for the life of me remember where I last wore them.”

Perhaps one of our quaintest discoveries was made under a circle seat on a very hot day in June. It consisted of an extremely neat pair of corsets entirely innocent of any covering of any kind, next to which, with rosy, blushing cheeks, lay a large ripe apple. The mystery of those corsets and that apple has never been cleared up, and we have at last given up all hope of solving it.

Nor have we yet been able to find out why some good lady patroness of our pit was good enough to leave us a souvenir in the shape of an extremely “fetching” pink silk petticoat and a pair of goloshes, size three. A veil of mystery, which we should dearly love to pierce, also hangs over a neat parcel, which, upon opening it, was found to contain a framed photograph of an extremely pretty girl with lovely eyes, around which were carefully wrapped a large pair of what the hosiers technically call “gent’s” knitted night socks! Mysterious, too, was an opera-glass case which had lost its glasses and held in their stead five false teeth!

But I will forbear from quoting any further from our



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lost property list, for I fear that a limited warehousing department has compelled the destruction of not a few of its items. At any rate, let me warn the owner of that pound of sausages her property is no more. *Necessité*, she may remember, *n'a pas de loi*.

It may scarcely be credited, yet it is a fact well known to theatrical managers, that people frequently get into theatres by mistake. When Mr. Tree first revived "The Merry Wives of Windsor" at his beautiful theatre "across the road" we were attracting large audiences with a revival of "Caste." One night after the first act two burly countrymen descended from the gallery and demanded an audience of our business-manager. He was sent for, and on arrival politely asked what their grievance was. "Well, look 'ere, mister," said the spokesman of the two, "we want our money back; Tree ain't been on yet, and as for merry wives, why, those two girls won't be married in their natural!"

This reminds me of another capital story of a similar nature. It happened at the Lyric Theatre, where the divine Sarah was electrifying audiences at the time. More than half through the piece the business-manager was informed that two of the audience wanted to see him. He at once went down and found an indignant farmer and his wife.

"This ain't fair at all, sir," blurted out the old man. "We paid five shillings for our two seats; we've been 'ere for two hours and ain't understood a blooming word; and *Arthur Roberts ain't been on yet!*"

A business-manager has awkward as well as amusing duties to perform in connection with the audiences that nightly visit his theatre. One of his chief difficulties is in connection with the exclusion of babies, who, naturally enough, are not welcome guests in first-

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rate theatres. Many and varied and subtle are the excuses offered by eager custodians to induce the business-manager to relax his rule for the exclusion of infants.

"Mother would 'ave 'ad 'er," one will say, "but she was suddenly called to Mrs. Muggeridge's, who 'as been took hill with 'er forth, pore dear, and 'er 'usband's on the drink agin, though 'ow 'e does it wivvout no money is a lickier to me, as the saying goes, and so we thought, young gentleman, as 'ow you'd per'aps let biby in?"

"Well," replies the polite "young gentleman," "but how am I to know that the baby won't start crying during the performance?"

"Lor bless yer kind 'eart, sir," replies the infant's guardian, thinking to score a heavy point, "I know she won't. She was as quiet as a mouse at grandpa's funeral last Thursday."

But the attempted introduction of the baby is not the worst of the business-manager's troubles. His pet aversion is the gentleman who has looked upon the wine when it is red. Obviously it would be dangerous to the good reputation of the house to admit the unwise diner; at the same time the greatest care must be taken not to offend him. Besides, your wine-bibber is not invariably easy of conviction. The usual plan is to inform him politely that there has been some mistake over his ticket and return him his money. But even this admirable plan does not invariably succeed. One night a gentleman who had certainly not been sparing the wine turned up at the theatre, and, upon the usual excuse about a mistake having been made about his seat, promptly produced two tickets bought at two different libraries.

"I (hic) thought you'd shay that," he chuckled amiably, "so I bought (hic) another!"

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I never shall forget another bibulous patron of our theatre who at intervals during the first act insisted on shouting with great good-humour: "Good old Maude! God save the King!" During the first interval he was severely reprimanded and, upon discovery that he was hopelessly intoxicated, "chucked." His indignation was tremendous. He abused everybody connected with the theatre, and it required no little effort to remove him.

The following night he turned up again, but this time perfectly sober and extremely apologetic for his conduct of the night before. So eager was he to prove his regret that he wanted to treat my whole staff to refreshment. Later in the evening, meeting our assistant business-manager in the passage, he took him aside and confided to him that for years past it had been his custom to get drunk on the anniversary of his wedding day!

Poor fellow, perhaps he was justified!

But those who watch audiences night after night see many funny things. It is, I believe, no extraordinarily unusual thing to see an absent-minded cavalier mistake his topper for an opera hat and crush it flat against his manly bosom. Nor is it unusual to find the gentleman who removes his overcoat in full view of the audience, take off his dress-coat at the same time, only to display a considerable quantity of blue flannel shirt. But I have only heard of one good lady who has, I believe, been an ardent playgoer for years and invariably brings a marketing bag made of matting with her, full to the brim with various purchases. From the same bag the lady never forgets to take out two pieces of thick brown paper, upon one of which she sits, while on the other she rests her feet.

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The most extraordinary playgoer, however, of whom I have ever heard was a mysterious old gentleman who was a frequent attendant during the late Mr. Buckstone's management. He would come in at the beginning of the performance (the performances were very long in those days, it will be remembered), seat himself against the wall and take a large old-fashioned watch out of his pocket, and carefully deposit it on the seat beside him. He would then turn his back upon the stage, and so sit throughout the entire entertainment. At the end of the performance he carefully consulted his watch, restored it to his pocket, and rising with a sigh left the theatre without a word to a single soul. This extraordinary programme he would repeat night after night for weeks together, but no one ever discovered the reason for his eccentric behaviour.

Talking of eccentricities reminds me of a dear old lady who was once a member of our company and displayed the most remarkable faculty for swallowing anything that might be told her. Another member of our company at the same time was a young man with a great love for "greening," and the lies he used to make that poor old lady swallow were positively enormous! One day she was intensely interested to learn that English race-horses were invariably trained with express trains running beside them; and on the eve of Boat-race day, on inquiring where the race was rowed, she was informed that they rowed it alternately from Cambridge to Oxford and from Oxford to Cambridge! On another occasion, when an important cricket match was in progress, she was told that in the first innings one of the two Elevens had made no less than 3845, with five wickets still to fall. And still her credulity held out!

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But the best joke of all was when some one solemnly went to the dear old lady and assured her that a near relation of Mr. Tree was shortly going to fly down the Haymarket from the top of His Majesty's Theatre on a wire. So fully did she believe the story that she actually went to her room and wrote straight off to Mr. Tree asking him for a seat at a window from which she might view his relation's remarkable feat!

"Spoof," somehow, seems inseparable from a theatre, but the "spoof" is nearly always good-humoured. This book, by the way, was responsible for an incident which gave us all a good laugh not many months ago. We were rummaging in some of the old Haymarket boxes in search of some old records, when, at the bottom of one, we came upon some very ancient music in manuscript, upon which time has laid so heavy a hand that it crumbled to pieces when we touched it. Our stage-manager was struck with an idea, and so, picking out one of these pieces, he sent it to be carefully framed. A couple of days afterwards he went to our musical-director with a face upon which was nothing but solemnity, and informed him that, knowing him to be a lover of musical curiosities, he would be glad to hear that he had come across an original piece of Beethoven's music, which was for sale at the extremely low price of half a guinea. Our enthusiastic musical-director would not rest until he had seen the treasure, which he instantly purchased, declaring it to be an undoubted specimen of the great master's original work!

He was not particularly pleased to learn, a few days later, that it was a piece of an old band part used in the younger Colman's day.

This reminds me of a piece of "spoof" that dates back many years. It was during Benjamin Webster's



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management. Some one "greened" Fred Webster that Sir John Franklin, about whom there was much public excitement at the time, had been discovered. Fred Webster went on the stage and announced the discovery amid wild enthusiasm, and a Government official came round to the stage door to inquire where the news had come from!

## CHAPTER XVIII

"THE Second in Command" has, so far, been the most successful of all our productions, as it has been the most popular of all my friend Robert Marshall's clever plays. To him we owe much, and I would fain offer him a word of thanks here, not only for the pieces with which he has provided us, but for his unfailing good-humour and his readiness to fall in with any views we might express. We have been very lucky in our authors, but in no case luckier than in that of Marshall.

At the dress-rehearsal of "The Second in Command" a junior officer of cavalry was present and watched the proceedings with much interest. At the end of the evening he was questioned as to his opinion of the piece.

"My dear fellow," he said, "if you only tone down the yellow stripe on the orderly's overalls the piece will go like beans."

At this same dress-rehearsal was a Semitic gentleman, who was so delighted with the play that he was heard to whisper :

"Gawd—for the provinces !"

"The Second in Command," by the way, was productive of one of the most remarkable letters I have ever received. I give it in extenso :

"DEAR SIR,—I have written a play, and for some weeks I was unable to decide whether to send it to



*From the portrait by Daniel Wehrschmidt*

CYRIL MAUDE

PLATE XVIII



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you or to Mr. Tree. Finally, however, as I hope you will be glad to hear, I decided on you.

"Considering the recent great success you had with 'The Second in Command,' I cannot but anticipate a similar success with mine. It is a naval play, and I was well qualified to write it, having been a surgeon in the navy, addicted to writing, a keen amateur actor, and a persistent playgoer.

"The leading part (your part) is that of a naval officer, who is supposed to be the son of a bishop by a woman who had been in the ballet. But nothing is definitely known. Anyhow, your two characteristics are, a passion for practical joking and fitful moments of religious devotion. In Act I., owing to one of your jokes, a midshipman is killed, which so works on you that you resign your commission and in an ecstasy of religious enthusiasm enter a monastery. Here all goes well for a time, but eventually your inbred love of practical joking reasserts itself, and in a sudden fit you play pranks in the monastery, and again accidentally kill a young monk. It now transpires that you are the son of the Father Superior, and you learn this in a highly dramatic scene. 'Who then,' you demand, 'is my mother?' Upon this the Mother Superior (hitherto of unsuspected virtue) comes forward and says, '*I am!*' (Sensation.)

"This, of course, alters things, and your child (you have a young illegitimate son) appears on the scene, and the action becomes both exciting and involved.

"This is only a crude character sketch, but if you *feel* the idea, will you kindly suggest what fees I should receive?

"The writing is—if I may say so—of extraordinary



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brilliance, and in the words of the company manager, 'There's money in it.'—Yours faithfully."

The name I suppress. If ever comment were superfluous, surely it would be so in this case. I sent the letter, by the way, to my friend Mr. W. S. Gilbert. His reply was very characteristic :

"DEAR MAUDE,—Delightful ! This play must be an admirable type of the 'illegitimate' drama.—Always truly yours,  
W. S. GILBERT."

Apropos of the above letter, I cannot forbear quoting one or two other remarkable epistles that I have taken from my files.

One of these is of quite recent date.

"SIR,—I understand from the *Era* of even date that your next production will be the 'Clandestine Marriage.' I believe in taking time by the forelock, and to that end I now write to ask for the part of Brush or Mr. Sterling's servant. Your knowledge of Old English comedy is too profound for me to remind you that the servants of Garrick's period were invariably *black men*, or at any rate coloured, such being the fashion of the day. Under these circumstances I do not feel that you can justly consider my request ill-timed. Besides this, the additional attraction that must of necessity obtain from the introduction of a coloured actor in your cast must not be overlooked.—Thanking you in anticipation, I have the honour to be your most humble servant."

Another letter from a coloured comedian affords such an interesting example of the English language

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that I give it just as I received it. The orthography is striking, to say the least of it. I would explain that we were able to do the writer some trifling service.

“DEAR SIR,—I hope you did not think I did not received the most thankfull gift.

“That during all my troubles since December when I went home with a teriable illness from 1 of the Principal Theatres in the S.E. of London of course. if a first Physsion order you to save your master’s company from a dangerous feeever. *Well.* I will say no more the above mater but thanking you for the

‘ Gift ’

and your servant for running Round looking for me. The when was he was Doing This I was trying to get out of a Beautifull pair of Rhumattic betwin my two knees and from the Keens to the Big-toes, cause by a friendly landlady whom put me in a room at the rate of 6/6 per week, and under my *bed* the Pleasant Water-Tank, which remain not to lecture one. I have wrote to every manager. Only and servante took the Trouble of

‘ Yoursel.’

“Giving. To Sir I am well quaitte with the *Ambassider* of Japan.

“MR. DIOSIE

“Hanover Square.

“You are the only person I have told. Excuse these mistakes as the above is a very big free and accepted free mason of Elu Baker Caba of Jerusalem and I

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happen to be in the same Loge, and Hold Big Position.  
—I Beg to Remain, Sir, your Fraternally.”

Among the most touching of the many epistles I have received in my time is one from, I presume, a young lady, whose acquaintance I have never had the honour of making. It contains between its leaves a crushed spray of tiny artificial flowers that once, no doubt, formed part of an evening gown’s adornment. The letter runs :

“DEAR MR. MAUDE,—I thought before leaving town I would write you a farewell letter and say that should you ever be looking out for ‘talented people’ I shall be glad if you will remember me. Finding photos and letters useless in softening your heart, I now send you a ‘faded flower,’ an example of what I am through the constant worry of ‘theatrical managers.’—Faithfully yours.”

To show the deep interest taken by some members of the public in us poor players, I cannot resist printing the following. The name of the maker of the belt I suppress :

“DEAR SIR,—I have just been reading the interview with your wife in *The Golden Penny*, and in reference to the remarks about feeling cold on the stage, I thought the following item of information might not be without some interest to ‘Babbie’ and ‘Micah Dow.’ I dislike wearing an *overcoat* myself, and instead I wear one of ——’s Galvanic belts, for the reason alone that it gives me an equal amount of warmth and does not hinder my freedom of movement. I am only interested in the matter to the

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extent that this letter implies, but Messrs. — know that I am in the habit of talking to my friends and acquaintances in this strain.—Yours respectfully.”

The politest letter that either my wife or myself has ever received was addressed to us jointly. It refers to a charity matinée, at which we played some small piece. So polite is it, that I quote it as a perfect example of extreme courtesy :

“DEAR SIR AND MADAM,—We pray permission to crave your courtly commands as to what time we may have the honour and pleasure of reserving for you on — at the matinée in aid of the —, at which matinée, with that characteristic generosity so prevalent in your natures, you have so nobly consented to lend your indescribable assistance.

“We earnestly implore your permission to be allowed to convey to you how much you have assisted and aided the cause in whose interests we have laboured.

“You were very kind enough to convey to us the courtly intimation you would probably select a dialogue as your important contribution to the programme, and may we pray permission to appeal to you now for further particulars for the programme?

“We venture to crave the honour and privilege of your gracious co-operation in making the matinée that brilliant success every one is combining to bring about.—Yours to command.”

Searching among old letters and papers I came across an envelope containing a few grains of earth, and marked on the outside, “Earth from Mr. Gladstone’s grave.” I happened to be present at the great statesman’s funeral. Present also was a fire-

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man, whose regular employment was at one of the leading London theatres, and seeing me there he was so good as to collect a small quantity of earth and bring it to me at the Haymarket Theatre. But I, as a member of what some would call a rabid Tory family, and the son of one of the keenest Conservatives I have ever met, was, I fear, but an unworthy recipient.

This gift reminds me of one of the most extraordinary instances of real sense of honour that I have ever encountered. As a youth I was not of the strongest, so my parents wisely decided to send me to Australia in a sailing ship in order to thoroughly recruit my health. I booked a passage, and a very health-giving, though somewhat monotonous, voyage I had. I was then, as I have said, a youth of about seventeen; to-day I am a careworn manager of forty. Yet only last year I received the following letter:

“DEAR MR. MAUDE,—I dare say you will hardly remember me, but some years ago I was third mate on the ——— when you were, I believe, passenger with Captain ——— and ———. I think I made a bet with you that when Captain ——— married his wife was a widow. I propose now to pay this long-standing debt. Will send you £1 if I am right in supposing that you were with us on that voyage.—Yours sincerely.”

One more letter and I have done with my curious correspondence. Some little while ago I wrote to my former housemaster at Charterhouse and excellent friend Mr. Davies, asking him if he would care for a box at the theatre one night. To my intense astonishment I received in reply a letter beginning, “Dear Sir,” and saying that he was not sure whether he wanted the old box, but would have the two stools,



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provided they were not "stained, varnished, or otherwise befooled." In great fear lest my good friend had suddenly lost his senses, I wrote in haste to say that I was afraid that there must be some mistake in his letter. The following was the reply :

"VERITES, CHARTERHOUSE,  
"GODALMING.

"DEAR MAUDE,—I haven't laughed so much for many days as when I got your letter. The comedy of errors is too deliciously complete to be true.

"First of all, the letter you got was meant for an old furniture man who had shown us two old oak cottage stools, but as he had often sinned against me by staining, varnishing, and 'otherwise befooling' my old oak before he sent it home, I sternly forbade it. But the mental picture of a portion of your audience arriving with plain unvarnished stools calls up visions of the ticket-taker's astonishment that I haven't got over yet.

"But the other side of the story is even more killingly fit. The old furniture man has got a letter beginning "Dear Maude" (I hope to goodness it may not be his wife's name!), in which I express great gratitude for the box, and say how much we are looking forward to sitting in it! And that's not the end, for the last time we were at his shop, some few days since, he pressed us very hard to buy an old wooden box of no great size, and we left it, like the stools, an open question. What the man must think of our proposal to sit in it, I dare not imagine!

"Anyhow, whether the seats be varnished or unvarnished, we mean to come and sit on them and enjoy ourselves.—Yours gratefully,

"GERALD S. DAVIES."

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I find on looking back upon what I have written that I have made no mention of two of the authors who have provided us with successful and, if I may say so, brilliant pieces. I refer to my friends Mr. Sydney Grundy and Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, in whose plays I hope often to act again before I make my final bow. Let me hope that they will accept this tardy expression of my gratitude and admiration.

When Grundy first wrote a play for us I noticed that he seemed very restless and unhappy. He could do nothing but fidget about, and was constantly going out and strolling up and down in front of the theatre for ten minutes or so at a time. I was much puzzled as to what could possibly be the matter with him, and neither Harrison nor myself could discover a reason for his apparent discomfort. At last one day after the rehearsals had been some little time in progress Grundy came up to me rather mysteriously, and after talking a few commonplaces said :

"I say, Maude, by the way I hear Marshall smokes in the theatre when he's rehearsing. Is that so?"

"Yes, of course," I replied.

A look of great joy illumined Grundy's face.

"Thank Heaven," he replied ; "then I can smoke my pipe." And forthwith out came a briar.

From that moment all trace of restlessness and discontent vanished.

I fear that Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, good friends as we are, has never yet quite forgiven me for "gagging" in my part of Lord Bapchild in his brilliant comedy, "The Manœuvres of Jane." In vain, I am ashamed to confess, did he reason with me and endeavour to persuade me that I was spoiling his play. I simply could not resist the laughs. Everywhere would Mr. Jones pursue me with his complaints, and even when

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I took my morning ride in the Row would he be on my track. I would be ambling along enjoying the fresh morning air, and happy with the pleasant thoughts induced by a successful run, when I would hear the patter of another horse's hoofs behind me, and a voice would murmur :

"Yes, it is a very pretty and a very comfortable theatre, with a wonderful record, and a great favourite with the public. But don't you think it's a pity to defile so classic a house with such a vulgar thing as 'gags'? Do you really think it advisable to introduce lines into a successful comedy that are not in keeping with the rest of the piece?"

I would put my cob at a gallop; but in vain, for sure enough Mr. Jones would be after me like a shot, complaining while we were going full speed round the Row of my mutilation of his work!

Is it too late now, I wonder, to tender him my abject apologies—now as I ring down the curtain on this my first and, probably, last appearance in the part of author?

For I must speak the tag. All I have had to say about the Haymarket Theatre has been said so far as I can say it. As those who have borne with me will have found, its history has, on the whole, been of the happiest so far. What material Fate will give to succeeding chapters of its life-story no man can tell. But I can dare promise that so far as I am concerned there shall be nothing left undone to make them bright and happy.



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